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## BINDON PARVA

A Mills & Boon Masterpiece

# BINDON PARVA

BY

GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM

THIRD EDITION

*Birmingham Post*.—"Mr. Birmingham has done for a little Dorset parish something of what 'Puck of Pook's Hill' did for Southern England. The finest thing he has done since 'Spanish Gold.' For the rest, we have humour, sympathy, knowledge of human nature; above all the true storyteller's knack of living in and with his people."

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*Church Times*.—"The idea of the book is original and some of the stories are quite beautiful. All are worth reading."

# BINDON PARVA

BY  
GEORGE A. BIRMINGHAM

AUTHOR OF  
"SPANISH GOLD"



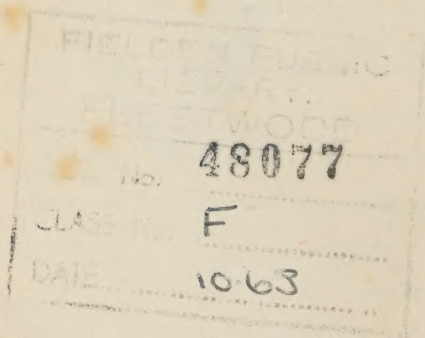
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## TO MY WIFE

My dear,

You and I have seen the fun of things together and have laughed, I hope without bitterness. I do not regret one moment of our merriment. Do you? Nor do I think the time will ever come when we shall not laugh at the delightful incongruities of life. But all the while we have known very well that, besides the explosive absurdities which tickled us, there are other things at which it is not good to laugh, even although the outward show of them is sometimes funny enough. About some of these things I have had to speak, too often, from pulpits, and perhaps that is the reason that I have not hitherto felt any wish to write about them. For writing is a kind of safety valve, useful only when there is no other escape for the steam of emotion. But now—I do not know why—I do want to write about things which are not to us a subject for laughter. Therefore, I have tried the experiment of these stories. Very likely I have written them badly. It was easy enough to take off the jester's cap and pack it away. It is not so easy to fit oneself with a knight's helmet, a bishop's mitre, a judge's wig, a philosopher's bald skull, or whatever other headgear heroic and serious people wear. Very likely, too, I shall lose my friends by offering them these stories. Those who used to like to laugh with me will be disappointed; and very solemn people will not be able to shake off the contempt they have always felt for me. So it seems likely that no one will read these stories—except you. But on your sympathy I

## DEDICATION

can count, for we have felt these things together and talked about them, long before I thought of trying to write about them.

I might, of course, have told these stories in quite another way. The half mad priest whose experiences I recall could easily have been posed as a figure of fun, a pleasant enough subject for genial mockery. The men he knew, or believed that he knew, are most of them fair game for the jester. The cleric, vowed to celibacy, who got into trouble with a village girl was once a stock subject with the merrier kind of story teller. The parson who was admitted to the squire's dinner table on Sundays and left it "before the pudding" is a comic figure. I should find it easy to laugh at them and easier still to laugh at Maturin for supposing that all these people assembled as a congregation in his little church. But there is that in the experience of these people and even in Maturin's visions at which I do not want to laugh.

Into the mouth of Lionel Darrell—the imaginary partner of my imaginary writer—I have put a kind of apology for Maturin's delusions. Perhaps apology is the wrong word, but I hesitate to write explanation. For his theory of the consecration of churches is not an explanation of anything, being itself in need of a good deal of explaining before any ordinary man will be induced to accept it. I add it to the stories because it may interest people who are, as I am not, of a mystical turn of mind.

There, my dear, you have my apology for the matter and manner of these stories, offered to you in the hope that you will understand and forgive.

Lulworth Cove,  
September, 1923.

G.A.B.

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# BINDON PARVA

## I

### MATURIN

LAST autumn Lionel Darrell was ill. The trouble began with an ordinary attack of influenza. Other things followed because Lionel was a fool and would not go to bed in time. In the end he had to go to bed and stay there for several weeks. That is how it happened that I met Sylvester Maturin, and went down to Bindon Parva and heard the stories I am going to write.

Lionel Darrell and I are architects and have been in partnership since the war. He does the ecclesiastical part of our business, restoring churches, erecting lych gates, designing war memorials, and even re-hanging bells, a most difficult thing. I build week-end cottages for people who want them and plan restaurants or tea-houses likely to catch the eye of trippers to the more popular watering places. I would build palaces or town halls if I got the chance. Once I did erect thirty small houses in a row for a County Council which had been goaded by a Cabinet Minister into building something. It turned out afterwards that there was no water

anywhere near them, but that was not my fault. They were also horribly ugly, which I suppose was partly my fault. Lionel certainly blamed me; but I do not think he would have done any better. His tastes are entirely ecclesiastical; and although he knows as much about English churches as any man living he could not design a habitable house, ugly or beautiful.

It was while Lionel was laid up that the Reverend Sylvester Maturin called at our office. He was shown into my room and I had to deal with him and his business.

I was not attracted by his appearance. He was shabby. I do not blame him for that. Most of our clergy are condemned to shabbiness now. But he was also dirty. I felt that however poor he was he might have brushed his coat, polished his boots a little, shaved properly, and washed his hands. He had a narrow, lean face, stooped shoulders and a shambling walk. His hands were clammy and shaky. I jumped to the conclusion that he was either very poor indeed, poor to the point of starvation, or else drank too much, at night, privately. I was wrong in both guesses. He is not very poor. For a bachelor he is fairly well off. He never touches wine or whisky.

Maturin's business concerned the south wall of the chancel of his church. He believed that

there were mural paintings on it underneath the whitewash and plaster with which bygone churchwardens had covered the wall. He wanted to have this stuff cleaned off and the pictures revealed. He came to us hoping that we would undertake the work. That showed some sense. Lionel Darrell is the best man in England for that sort of thing.

The discovery of the paintings was the work of a choir boy. The urchin—bored to extremities perhaps by Maturin's sermons—had taken to scaling off flakes of whitewash from the wall behind him with his thumb nail. To his surprise he uncovered a picture of a goat's foot. He revealed his discovery to his fellow choristers, and their excitement attracted Maturin's attention. He stopped their investigations by turning them all out of their accustomed seats.

Maturin's theory was that the wall was covered with representations of the Seven Deadly Sins, and that the opposite wall, as yet unscraped by any choir boy, had on it pictures of the Seven antagonistic Virtues. That seemed to me a flighty deduction from one goat's foot. But Lionel, whom I consulted, regarded it as quite likely. He told me that mediæval artists were very fond of adorning churches with pictures of the Seven Deadly Sins, which they sometimes represented as animals. A wolf

stood for Anger, a peacock for Pride, and so forth.

Lionel was interested and excited, almost as much excited as the choir boys. He cursed his illness and made me promise to go down to Bindon Parva. He gave me instructions for the work of scraping the walls and told me to take a camera and a box of water colours with me. He wanted photographs and coloured sketches of any sins I might discover. I had very little work on my hands at the time so I made arrangements to leave London and spend a fortnight in Bindon Parva. My idea was to put up at the local inn, making myself as comfortable as I could.

That turned out to be impossible because there is no inn in Bindon Parva. Maturin, after explaining this, asked me to be his guest in the vicarage. I could do nothing but accept the invitation, although I did not want to.

It was early in November when I got away from town. I took the train to Wareham, and there hired a dilapidated Ford car for the drive to Bindon Parva. It was a gloomy afternoon, and soon after we left Wareham it began to rain. I remember seeing Corfe Castle, looming grey through a driving squall. Then my driver turned away to the right. Of the rest of the drive I recollect little except damp discomfort. We

went up and down a seemingly interminable series of hills until at last I smelt and heard sea. Then in a hollow among the downs we came on Bindon Parva.

The place can scarcely be called a village. There is one substantial farm house, Maturin's Vicarage and the church. There are, I now know, other houses in the parish, but they are scattered about and I did not see them that afternoon.

Maturin is a bachelor. That was a relief to me when I heard it, for I had rather a dread of Mrs. Vicar, a lady who is often talkative and is inclined to interfere with comfort by attempting to live up to a standard impossible in a Vicarage. Afterwards I came to feel sorry that Maturin was not married. A lady, finding herself in the position of hostess, would have seen to it that her guest got enough to eat. Under Maturin's care I very nearly starved. That was not because he was too poor to buy food. He could have bought plenty. Nor was it because he was a miser who grudged his guest food. Maturin is not a man who would try and save money by making someone else uncomfortable. The trouble was that he eats very little himself and it did not occur to him that I was accustomed to eat a great deal. He would have given me more to eat if he had thought I wanted it. He did pro-

vide me with a bottle of whisky. He never touched it himself, but he insisted that I should drink some every evening, mixed with hot water and sugar. That was his idea of the way whisky is usually drunk. I doubt whether he had ever heard of soda water.

In the course of that evening I discovered that Maturin is a learned archæologist, an historian of unusually wide knowledge, and slightly mad. As a rule archæologists are bores, and historians are inclined to be priggish. Maturin was neither. He talked about the past of his parish with affectionate enthusiasm. But he talked about it in a very queer way. He gave the impression that he actually knew the people that lived in Bindon Parva two or three hundred years ago. He spoke about men who had been dead for centuries as if they were friends whom he often saw, as if it would not surprise him in the least if one or two of them dropped in for a chat that evening. There was, for instance, a disreputable parson—I shall come to his story later on—whom Maturin talked about as “poor Tommy Burke,” precisely as if Tommy had been a drunken poacher recently sent to gaol. There was a priest belonging to the time of Edward IV. or thereabouts, whom Maturin seemed to know intimately. His story is the first I intend to write.

Maturin certainly did not get his information out of printed books. No books I ever met contain the sort of stories he told. He may have invented them, building them up on fragments of local tradition and giving his imagination free play. If so he is certainly a little mad for he believed every single one of the stories he told, believed them all to be facts. That was the uncomfortable impression I got that first evening. It was strengthened later on.

Next morning I went down to the church. It is a squat little building with a low, square tower, standing by itself in a field behind Maturin's house. The architecture is Norman, almost untouched Norman, though there are a couple of small early English windows and a Tudor porch. Lionel would go into raptures over it. The cracked chancel arch would move him to enthusiasm. He would find out all sorts of things about every stone in the tower. I wasted no time either sentimentalizing or archæologizing. I wanted to get to my job as quickly as I could, for I was afraid of being starved to death if I dawdled.

I began at the choir boy's goat's foot, and in the course of the day uncovered what appeared to me to be a most repulsive looking faun. The creature had the hairy legs common to his kind, long sinewy arms and a pair of curved horns on

his head. He was not very well drawn and was crudely painted; but the artist had succeeded in getting a perfectly vile expression on the beast's face. Priapus, perhaps, while he still had bodily form, might have had such a face. Thank heaven I never saw anything equal to it on a living man.

Maturin looked in just as I was finishing and he recognised the beast at once. He called him Luxuria, and seemed greatly pleased to have his portrait on the chancel wall. He would be the very last thing I should think of painting in any church I was asked to decorate.

I had brought down with me Lionel's masterly monograph on the Seven Deadly Sins, and that evening I looked up Luxuria. It was not, according to the best authorities, at all what we mean by luxury. It was a great deal worse. The things which the ancient fathers of the church wrote about Luxuria would make the author of *La Garçonne* feel hot and uncomfortable. The Bindon Parva artist had grasped their idea exactly. I could only suppose that Maturin did not know what it all meant, and was pleased with the red paint—the beast was mostly red—just as a child might be, because it looked gay.

That night Maturin talked to me again, and again I was most uncomfortably impressed with

the feeling that he was somehow on terms of familiarity with a number of dead men. I do not want to give the impression that he was in the least like people who dabble with spiritualism. He did not talk of "those who have passed over" or treat intercourse with them, as "spooky" people always do, as if it were something so mysteriously delicious as to be wicked; like schoolgirls tiptoeing round something which they suspect of being indecent without quite knowing why. It was chiefly Maturin's predecessors in office in the little church who interested him, and he talked about them precisely as if they were still walking about the parish in commonplace flesh and blood. He knew about them, not vaguely through spirit rappings and automatic writings but as we all know people with whom we hold constant conversation. He was neither frightened nor particularly thrilled at the thought that he had somehow become intimate with Hugh Freyne, his mediæval priest, or Tommy Burke, friend of smugglers and good liquor, or Ralph Glendinning, the vicar of Bindon Parva who fought for King Charles against Cromwell.

I slept badly that night. I daresay that was partly because I was half starved. It was also partly because the abominable face of Luxuria clung to my memory. And I had been nervously

excited by Maturin's weird talk. I began to feel that if I stayed much longer in Bindon Parva I should begin to see ghosts myself.

I dropped off into a doze somewhere about three o'clock; but I got little good of that, for I woke again, hopelessly and completely, about five. Maturin's room was next mine. I heard him moving about and wondered what he was doing at that hour. I was not long in doubt. From the movements I heard and the sound of splashing water I knew that he must be washing and dressing. Then I heard him close his bedroom door and go downstairs. I determined to get up. There was no use staying in bed when I could not sleep and I felt that I should like to know what Maturin was doing. In the mood I was in, I should scarcely have been surprised to find him practising some kind of magic in his study.

But it was not to his study that he went. I heard him open and close the hall door. Then, when I was nearly dressed, he began to ring the church bell.

I thought I knew what he was at. It has become the fashion lately among the more pious of our clergy to go off to their churches and hold solitary services at uncomfortable hours. Why they practise these devotions very early in the morning is a puzzle to me. They cannot suppose that God likes a collect better at seven in the

morning than at ten, or that their own souls will be specially in tune with eternity when their bodies are half asleep. Perhaps they like to be alone in their churches, and choose these early hours because they know that none of their parishioners is likely to be out of bed.

As I had nothing better to do I went off to join Maturin in the church. When I left the house I was met by a damp, south-westerly wind which slapped me in the face. It was pitch dark but I could hear the sea booming on the beach a few hundred yards away. I waded across Maturin's field to the church. The coarse brown autumn grass was blown against my legs and wet me from the knees down. I was guided on my way by the glimmering of a faint light coming through one of the side windows of the chancel. I stole in silently and sat down in a dark corner at the west end of the nave.

Bindon Parva church is small, very small and low-roofed. The nave would hold forty people, if every one of Maturin's rush-bottomed chairs had an occupant, and there is little room for any additional chairs. Between the nave and the choir are two worn stone steps, then four more steps, almost equally worn lead up to the rails of the sanctuary. In the east wall is a single lancet window, one of the Early English additions to the Norman architecture.

The church when I entered it was quite dark

save for the two spots of yellow light made by the altar candles. Maturin knelt on the foot space opposite the altar, and it was evident that he was going to say Mass. Mass is not a word I commonly use in describing the Communion Service of the Church of England. I am still Protestant enough to dislike the term, but I do not know any other which describes what Maturin was doing. I do not mean to suggest that he used any forms unauthorized by the Prayer Book, or said any words in Latin. He went straight through the ordinary service, neither adding nor omitting anything. Nor was he extravagant in his gestures or attitudes. You can hear the service read very much as Maturin read it in hundreds of churches all over England. It was the solitariness which made Mass a fitting name for it. Maturin did not expect his parishioners to be there and I do not think he wanted them. He had no idea that I was present.

He omitted nothing at all, not even the Ten Commandments. There were no responses, for I did not feel inclined to speak. But he waited a little after each Commandment exactly as if he expected to hear the Kyrie said. When he came to the Confession he repeated it very slowly, clause by clause, with slight pauses. The form of the confession in the Communion

Service is a little distasteful to me. I do not believe or feel that the remembrance of my sins is grievous or that the burden of them is intolerable, but Maturin said the words as if he meant them literally and exactly. I found it very hard to believe he had any sins bad enough to justify the language. Perhaps he meant to confess other people's sins for them, those of his parishioners, and they may have been a bad lot.

After the Prayer of Consecration had been said, I waited for Maturin to finish his private devotions, adorations, or whatever he did. I waited a long time, expecting every minute he would go on with the service. At last I looked up to see what was happening. I have seldom been more surprised than I was by what I saw. Maturin, with the paten in his hand was proceeding slowly along the chancel rails from south to north. It was precisely as if he were administering the sacrament to a row of kneeling communicants. Yet there was no one there. When he reached the north end of the rails he went back to the altar, deposited the paten and took the chalice in his hands. Then he passed along the rails again. This time I could hear his whispered utterance of the words of administration and I could see him lean forward from time to time and lower the chalice which he held.

I suppose the whole thing must have affected me oddly. I had slept badly. I had eaten next to nothing the day before. The church was very dark. There is plenty of excuse for me. I thought I saw Maturin take his hands off the chalice six or seven times, exactly as he might have taken them off if someone kneeling in front of him had received the chalice. Of course nothing of the sort could possibly have happened. The chalice would have fallen if Maturin had let it go. The laws of gravity are not suspended because an eccentric priest says his prayers in an old church at six o'clock in the morning. Yet I thought I saw that happen and certainly there was no one kneeling at the rails.

I shivered uncomfortably, and I remembered nothing more of the service until I heard Maturin give the Benediction. He did that in a very impressive way. It was as if he expected to convey—as if he actually did convey—the peace of God to someone or to several people who wanted it very badly. I daresay I wanted it badly enough myself, but it was not to me, or at me that Maturin was speaking. He had no thought that I was in the church.

I slipped back to the vicarage before Maturin left the church. I knew that there was a good hour before me before I could hope for any breakfast. I went into my room to put on dry

shoes and socks and another pair of trousers. I was uncomfortably wet and cold. Maturin's morning devotions are interesting and curious, but I made up my mind not to share them again. A damp, dark little church is no place for me in the early morning, and—the queer illusion about the chalice clung to my memory—I do not like miracles. The only proper place for a miracle outside the New Testament is in very ancient lives of saints. Any miracle is a disturbing thing when it gets within a few centuries of our own time and quite intolerable when it intrudes into ordinary life, especially in England. This is a land of common sense, and a miracle in Dorsetshire is nothing less than an outrage.

We had toast for breakfast that morning, an unusual luxury, two slices for me and one for Maturin, who only ate half of his. There was also a very small piece of butter—I had the whole of that—and some weak tea. I am ashamed to confess that when Maturin turned his back on the table after he rose, I grabbed the half piece of toast on his plate and stuffed it into my pocket. That is a deed of which I should not have believed myself capable beforehand, but I know now that I might do almost anything under pressure of hunger. I daresay I would eat part of a boy on a raft after a shipwreck if

someone else did the business of cutting his throat.

After breakfast, before getting to work on the church, I went down to the village post office and telephoned to the principal grocer in Wareham. I told him to send me two large tins of biscuits and a quantity of potted meat. I arranged that these provisions should be sent to the post office. I intended to smuggle them up to the vicarage after dark without attracting Maturin's attention. I did not want to hurt his feelings, and I fear I should have hurt them, if I let him find out that he was starving me.

That day I uncovered another Deadly Sin on the church wall. A huge pig with an enormously distended stomach. I was left in no doubt about what it represented, for the artist had written its name on its side, *Gula*, which means gluttony. At any other time of my life I should have viewed that pig with loathing. It had plainly over-eaten itself in the most disgusting way. The artist managed to suggest that it had gone on eating long after the excuse of appetite had disappeared, had eaten for the mere sake of eating. That morning I looked at it with a certain sympathetic admiration. I felt my fellowship with the creature, for I had purloined Maturin's half slice of toast and ordered a secret supply of food from Wareham.

If I am ever dragged into hell by one of the Seven Deadly Sins, and that, according to Lionel's monograph is what the creatures do, gluttony will be the one that gets me. I do not want to spend eternity in the company of the pig, sharing its smelly trough with it, but I am very much afraid I shall, if the only alternative is abstinence like Maturin's. I cannot face that.

The Wareham grocer was a prompt but un-intelligent man. That very afternoon he sent me 14 lbs. of ginger biscuits and a mixed lot of tinned and potted meat. I made a surreptitious meal on these incongruous foods before I went down to share Maturin's meagre supper. I wanted to talk to him about that ghostly congregation of his in the morning. I felt that I should be better able to ask sceptical questions if I were in the condition of the pig on the church wall. Had I been forced to go on fasting I might have been hypnotized again by Maturin's talk and gone to bed half convinced that the spirits and souls of men of other times were keeping vigil in the church, waiting for a priest to minister to them. Ginger biscuits and potted meat, taken in sufficient quantities, are a safeguard against mysticism which is a disease quite different from indigestion,

## II

### HUGH FREYNE

"PERHAPS," said Maturin, "you noticed the memorial stone to Hugo de Fresney in the church. It is on the south side of the altar."

I had noticed the stone, greatly worn and defaced. It bore the figure of a knight at arms and an inscription which was still partly legible. I intended to make a copy of it and send it back to Lionel. It is just the sort of thing that interests him.

"He was the first of the family," said Maturin, "and he built the old Manor House."

I knew something about the de Fresneys, who owned Bindon Parva since the days of Edward IV until the family petered out with a feeble-minded old gentleman with a wonderful collection of postage stamps in 1912. Since then there have been no de Fresneys at Bindon Park. The property passed to some distant relatives on the female side. The Manor House, four times rebuilt in the course of its history, is occupied by a caretaker.

"The original Sir Hugo," I said, "is

described on his tombstone as a most miserable sinner—‘*peccator miserrimus.*’ ”

So much of the inscription I had been able to decipher, and it rather surprised me that Sir Hugo’s sorrowing widow, or his affectionate son, or even his executors, should have described him in that way. Nowadays we are tenderer to the characters of our deceased relatives. We do not write nasty things about them on their tombstones.

“ Do you know anything about him? ” I asked.  
“ Was he as bad as all that? ”

Then Maturin began to talk.

“ The parish priest of Bindon Parva in those days,” he said, “ was Hugh Freyne. He was a young man, tall and strong, like a soldier rather than a priest to look at. Perhaps he ought not to have been a priest.”

Maturin sighed. Evidently that priest had got into trouble, perhaps because of his strength and soldierly qualities. I wondered if he had a fight with the knight whose tomb is in the church. I scented a story which might be interesting. Perhaps the knight killed the military ecclesiastic. That would account for his epitaph. It was a serious thing in those days to kill a priest, though it did not matter very much about killing anybody else.

“ One evening,” Maturin went on, “ he was

walking up and down outside the door of the church."

"Who?" I asked.

"Hugh Freyne, the priest. He was ill at ease. He paced quickly to and fro with short steps. He put one hand and then the other to his mouth and bit fiercely at his nails. When he was not biting his nails he twisted the girdle of his cassock into knots. There was sweat on his body and his thick eyebrows were dewed with it.

"It was an evening late in harvest time. The sun had set and the twilight was nearly passed. The villagers, who had toiled all day in the fields, had gone to rest. After eating their rough food they lay down in their cabins to sleep. The fields were three-quarters reaped. The cut corn stood in stooks. What was yet uncut waited ripe for the sickle in the morning. Beyond the harvest fields on the side of the downs was the common pasture land where the cattle grazed. It was a quiet evening and once the sounds of work ceased the whole land lay very peaceful. But Hugh Freyne, the priest, was not at peace. He muttered to himself as he walked. Now and then he stopped abruptly and cursed.

"There was only one light to be seen, a feeble glimmer, shining through the window of a cabin which stood by itself in a sheltered corner on the side of the hill near the sea. You can still see

the little nook where that cabin was, though no one has lived there for a long time now. The priest constantly looked at the light as he walked about.

“After awhile the light was extinguished and two women came from the door of the cottage. One of them was old, a tall, gaunt woman. She held herself straight and walked strongly. The other was younger, little more than a girl, slim, brown and comely. She carried a bundle in the chill of the evening air.

“The priest knew them. The old woman was Dame Elspeth Hatcham. All men accorded her the title of Dame, though none knew by what right she claimed it. Her husband had served as an archer in the army of King Henry V in France, and was there afterwards when the English burnt Joan of Arc at Rouen and lost their hold on the country. Since the death of her husband Dame Elspeth had lived in Bindon Parva and there her daughter grew to womanhood. Dame Elspeth was not one of the peasants, half serfs, who tilled the fields. She said that she was of gentle birth and it was reported of her that she was the daughter of some knight or lord.

“The two women, Dame Elspeth and her daughter with the babe, crossed the common land where the cattle lay. They picked their way

among the harvest stooks, skirting the patches of uncut corn. They came to the priest's field, passed over it and reached the door of the church. Hugh Freyne spoke no word of greeting to them nor they to him. He turned when they reached him and went into the church by the door at the south corner of the nave, where the porch is now. But then there was no porch, only a rough wooden door set in the round arch."

That was the way I went into the church. I had noticed that the porch was of later date, Tudor I think, but the rounded arch inside the porch was still discernible.

"He took a tallow candle from his pocket," Maturin went on, "lit it and then drove it hard down on an iron spike which was set in the wall above the font. The two women followed him into the church and stood beside the font. The priest began to mutter the words of the baptismal office low and fast as if he wanted to get through with a task which he disliked as quickly as possible. When the time came for the giving of the name he took the child in his arms. The old woman spoke the name in a clear hard voice.

" 'Hugh Freyne.'

"For a moment the priest hesitated. Then he went on, but he called the child Hugh only, not Hugh Freyne. Dame Elspeth interrupted him angrily.

“ ‘Though the boy cannot bear the name otherwise,’ she said, ‘yet shall it be given him thus in his baptism.’ And she repeated ‘Hugh Freyne,’ while her daughter, standing beside her, wept.

“ Once more the priest hesitated. Then, as if he feared to disobey, he gave the child the whole name as Dame Elspeth said it.

“ When the prayers were ended the priest stood beside the font with a troubled face like a man who does not know what to say or do. The girl with the babe in her arms stood with bowed head, still weeping bitterly but saying nothing. It was Dame Elspeth who spoke, and her words were fierce. She cursed the girl, her own daughter, because of the shame of her child-bearing. She cursed the priest because he was the father of the child and the cause of the girl’s disgrace. The words she spoke were coarse, because she was angry and did not want to spare either the man or the girl. But always, after cursing him or cursing her and calling the babe by evil names, she came back to what was the central part of all her anger, her pride in her own gentility.

“ ‘I am of gentle blood,’ she said, or else, ‘I who am of good blood must suffer shame because . . .’

“ That, the injury to her own pride, was what hurt her most, more than her daughter’s dis-

grace or the thought of the priest's sin. At last she said plainly that she would have no more to do with her daughter or the babe. Neither one nor other of them should enter her house again nor eat her bread.

“‘The girl is risen from her child bed,’ she said to the priest, ‘and the weakness of that time is past. She must fend for herself, or you must fend for her. I will have no more to do with her.’

“Then she turned and strode out of the church.

“For a time the priest and the girl with the babe in her arms stood without speaking. Only now and then a sob from the girl broke the silence. Outside it grew very dark. In the church the light was dim, only the feeble shining of the unsnuffed candle on the wall. At last the girl spoke.

“‘What to do? Oh, what to do?’

“As she spoke she looked up at the priest. He stepped towards her and took her in his arms and pressed her to him, but not very close, because with her elbows she kept him a little away from her, being afraid that his embrace might hurt the child that she held. He kissed her eyes and felt the salt tears on his lips. He kissed her wet cheeks. He kissed her mouth as if he were hungry for kisses. And so he was, because the

old woman had kept the girl from him for many months.

“At last, when he had done with kissing her, she drew her face back and looked up at him. Her eyes were tearful still, but they were full of trust and the wonderful surrender of a woman’s love.

“‘But what to do?’ she said again. Only this time she spoke like one who hoped, who has faith in another’s strength and goodness. She was sure that he would find a way for her.

“The priest took his arms from about her and drew back. He looked through the door, across the dim fields, and saw Dame Elspeth crossing the common land again towards her home.

“‘An angry woman, dearest one,’ he said, ‘a bitter, angry woman. But her anger matters not to me and you.’

“He laughed, as a man laughs who scorns a threat. But there was little confidence in his laughter.

“‘But what to do?’ said the girl again.

“‘This first,’ said the priest.

“And once more he took her in his arms and kissed her. And once more she lay passive, rapturously yielding to his embrace, though still taking care to shield her babe. By degrees the quick shower of his kisses slackened and he

spoke. Little by little he revealed the plan which he had made. There was a vacant house in the parish, a good house though small, and it could be made better with furnishings and draperies brought from some city. He could obtain the house. The girl could live there, she and her babe. She should be cared for and lack for nothing. Every day, he, Hugh Freyne the priest, would visit her. They should watch their boy grow to manhood. He would be her lover still, in all but legal name her husband."

Here Maturin paused in his story and made a hesitating dubious comment.

"I suppose," he said, "that the plan was possible. Indeed such things happened then, and with no great scandal if they were decently hid and not obtruded on the world's sight too much."

"If that nasty beast was on the church wall then," I said, "I mean the hairy legged Luxuria, it might have leered at Hugh Freyne unpleasantly when he said Mass. At least so I should suppose."

"But this that I am talking about," said Maturin, "was not lust but love, as you shall hear. Only the man was a priest. In that and not in the thing itself lay the sin."

"All the same," I said, "for priest or layman, that was a pretty rotten proposal for a man to

make to any girl. If there's anything in the theory about the deadly sins I should think Luxuria would have got him in the end and lugged him right down to hell. What's more, he'd have deserved it for making a proposal of that sort to a girl. I hope she didn't agree to it."

"For a while," Maturin went on, "she stayed quietly in his arms, not fully understanding. But at last she did understand and drew away from him.

" 'That,' she said, 'I will not do.' Then very piteously: 'Hugh, have you no more to say? That I cannot do. Even if I cared nothing for myself, yet for the sake of the child I will not live in sin.'

"He pleaded with her passionately, told her he could not live without her, that the sweetness and good of life all lay in her love, told her that the thing was no real sin or a very light one, that others did it, that . . .

"But she drew further away from him, moving towards the church door, and saying again and again as he pleaded, 'That I will not. That I will not.'

"At last at the very door of the church she stopped and with a sort of calm despair asked him once more,

" 'Is that all you have to say?'

“And he stood silent, cowed, though he was a big man and strong enough to have crushed her in his arms.

“ ‘Then,’ she said, ‘I must go. I and little Hugh together. And if we die, we die.’

“So she went out. He stood there brooding, and the devil tempted him, saying that the girl was a foolish prude and he was well rid of her, saying that he had made a generous offer, more generous than most men would have made, and indeed there was some truth in that, for Hugh Freyne was a man of parts and high ambition. He looked to be something more than parish priest of Bindon Parva before he died. And though bishops might look indulgently enough on the petty scandal of a poor priest’s life in an obscure parish, yet such a scandal might bar the road to promotion. Therefore it was no ungenerous offer which Hugh Freyne had made. If the girl sacrificed something in being his mistress, surely he sacrificed more in keeping her. If the girl chose to be a fool, then let her go, she and her child together. The blame for what might follow would be hers, not his. So the devil said, and in the end he might have prevailed. But Hugh Freyne loved the girl. And of all things in the world love is strongest. It is stronger than the devil.”

It seemed to me that love and the devil come to

much the same thing in the case of a celibate priest; at least that kind of love which ends in kisses. There may be other kinds, but even they would have been risky for Hugh Freyne.

But Maturin evidently regarded love as a saving power, something which at the last moment rescued his priest. I wondered how Maturin came to regard himself as an authority on the subject. I asked him a blunt question.

“What on earth do you know about love? Either the good or the bad of it? It hasn’t come your way in life, has it?”

He looked at me in a puzzled way, ran his fingers through his hair, and sat silent. I feared that I had damped his energy for story telling. But after a few minutes the effect of my question dried off him as light raindrops dry off a garment in the sunshine. He went on with his story:

“The priest stood there alone in the church for awhile. Then he came to a decision and began to act. He blew out the candle. He kneeled for a moment facing the altar. Perhaps he prayed; but it would not have been easy for him to pray then. He left the church, closing the door behind him. He went back to his house, changed his cassock for a short coat, drew on boots and buckled spurs on to them. He strapped a leather belt round him and hung a sword through it. He went to the stable behind his

house and saddled his horse, a strong brown gelding. Then he rode forth.

"In the window of Dame Elspeth's house the light burned again. The old woman was kneeling before a rough cross which hung on the wall of her room. She was praying that God might curse the man who had brought shame on her and her daughter. But Hugh Freyne neither glanced at the light nor heeded her prayers, if he guessed the purpose of them. He rode straight and fast up the rough path which led across the downs to Wareham. Soon he came upon the girl, trudging slowly forward with her babe asleep in her arms. He took her up on the horse behind him.

"They rode far that night, for the brown horse was strong and of good heart. He did not falter under the triple weight. Hugh Freyne did not falter of his resolve."

There Maturin stopped, precisely as if he had finished his story and there was no more to say. He rose from his chair and I believe he meant to suggest our going to bed. But I would not have that and made him sit down again.

"Go on," I said. "I want to know what happened to the priest and the girl. By the way you never mentioned her name. What was it?"

"I don't know her name," he said. "I never heard it."

“You might have invented it,” I said. “After all, you don’t know, you can’t possibly know any of the story you’ve told me. If you’ve imagined so much, you needn’t boggle at the name of the girl. Anyhow, go on. What happened to them?”

“In those days,” said Maturin, “England was turbulent and without law, or with very little law of either church or estate. The land was full of bands of desperate men, homeless outlaws, fighters, fearing neither God nor man. Great lords strove with each other everywhere. There were battles and sieges and burnings. The strongest was foremost until another came who was both strong and cunning. There was little loyalty or honour to redeem the violence. Men changed sides from one faction to the other as they discovered the chances of private gain. They were evil times.”

“What times were they?” I asked. “You haven’t given me a date from start to finish.”

“I thought,” said Maturin mildly, “that you knew. You said you knew that the first of the de Fresney’s came to Bindon Parva in the days of Edward IV and built the Manor House then when at last there was some peace and security after the war of York and Lancaster.”

“I don’t quite see,” I replied, “what the knight of the tombstone, the *peccator miser*.

*rimus* has to do with your story of the priest and the girl. What happened to them. I should think that a renegade priest would have met with scant mercy when they caught him."

"Whether it was ever known to men that he had been a priest I cannot tell. He was a stout man at arms and a faithful follower of the great lord with whom he took service. Through many troublous years he rode and fought. He won honour and trust and such advancement as his master had to give. He wedded the girl; to the quieting of her conscience though not of his own. He was fortunate, for in the end, when the Red Rose of Lancaster went down, he found himself on the winning side. They gave him a grant of land, part of the estate of a nobleman who had favoured Lancaster, and the estate lay here in Bindon Parva and along the coast. It was thus that Sir Hugo de Fresney came here and built the Manor House."

I thought awhile and then I understood. The names were the same. From Hugh Freyne to Hugo de Fresney was no real change. The first of the breed, whoever he was, had brought with him the particle, the "de," when he came from France. And the name had been spelled French fashion till one of his descendants, perhaps the priest, had Englished it. No doubt the old French form looked finer and sounded better for

a landowner and new-made knight. Also it was some slight disguise, scarcely necessary perhaps since many years had passed and no one in Bindon Parva who paid homage to the new lord of the soil was likely to remember the old story of the fugitive priest.

“So,” I said, “that was the beginning of the de Fresneys of Bindon Parva. I suppose it’s not altogether a nice story, but it might be worse. Many of our old families have less creditable origins. I wonder how the girl liked being ‘my lady.’”

“She was dead before he won the estate,” said Maturin. “The wandering life, the constant turmoil and the roughness, were too much for her. She died leaving a boy, Hugh, behind her. Her husband had a monument set up to her memory in the church. He used to visit it every day and pray beside it. Until the day of his death he never failed to hear Mass said in the church where he himself had once ministered. Men wondered about his piety, which was far beyond what was usual then among great men. It was supposed that he must have done some fiercely bloody thing, as indeed many men did, in the wild days of the wars, and was compelled to spend the rest of his life repenting of it.

“He gave many gifts to the church, which grew rich, though afterwards in other troubled times

its richness disappeared. Yet when his time came he died unconfessed and unabsolved, leaving behind him a writing in which was set down what was to be carved on his tomb. '*Peccator miserrimus*,' as you saw."

"Maturin," I said, "tell me this. Did he deserve that epitaph? Did he do right or wrong? I don't mean at first. That affair with the girl was wrong by any standard of morality. But afterwards in the church, when she refused to be his mistress, was he right or wrong in what he did then?"

"How can I tell?" said Maturin. "I do not know."

"You ought to know," I pressed him here. "As a priest of the Church you must have some standard by which you can judge."

"How can I know," said Maturin, "when even after all these years he does not know himself?"

That startled me. I have noted Maturin's strange habit of speaking about men of other centuries as if they were his personal friends. It is a thing which annoys because it puzzles me. This time I became impatient. Maturin had told me his story, a story which at the very best was fiction founded on some scrap of fact preserved by local tradition. But he had given me details, the candle stuck on a spike on the church wall, the colour of the horse, the words the priest said

to the girl, which no tradition could have preserved. He had spoken as if he knew the mind of the priest and what was in it, the way the devil tempted him and so forth. I was content to receive it all as the fruit of imagination working on the "*Peccator miserrimus*" on the tombstone, but I was not going to yield respect to Maturin's absurd claim to know what was in the mind of Hugo de Fresney now, the present thoughts of a man who had been dead for centuries.

I rose and said good-night.

I slept uneasily again—indigestion, not starvation this time—but though I was awake I did not rise to join Maturin in his church at six o'clock. I did not care for that ghostly Mass of his. I did not like to think of Sir Hugo waiting beside his defaced tombstone for Maturin to give him the Benediction his soul required.

### III

OLIVER MORTON

ON Sunday morning I could not work in the church, for Maturin, his choirboys and his villagers, wanted it. I attended matins and listened to a very dull, commonplace sermon. I was disappointed.

The commonplace was the very last thing I expected from Maturin. It would not have surprised me in the least if he had been mystical and totally unintelligible. Nor should I have been startled if he had been emotional. I had a sort of half hope that he would address his people on the Sin of Accedie, the picture of which I had uncovered on Saturday. It was a nasty creature, rather like a toad, and according to Lionel's book is a sort of laziness which takes all the spiritual energy out of the man who yields to it. A useful sermon might, I imagine, be preached about that. But Maturin missed his opportunity and read out to us a meek little discourse of the tritest and most obvious kind, the sort of sermon which I am told some parsons buy ready made, when they are too lazy to write their own.

After matins, when the congregation had dis-

persed, Maturin and I sat down on a rough, stone bench, which was set against the south wall of the church. It was one of those rare November days on which the sun shines warmly for an hour or two. We were sheltered from the wind and the place was pleasant enough, though the stone was a little chilly.

“It was here,” said Maturin, “that Oliver Morton sat with his writing papers on his knee and his ink horn on the bench beside him. He was shaping the nib of his pen with a sharp knife. He was a careful man about these things, and he needed a fine, firm pen for his delicate writing.”

“Tell me the story of this Morton,” I said. “But wait a minute before you begin. This stone bench is cold as well as being very hard. I must get something to put under me.”

Sitting on chilly stones in November may suit Maturin. It would probably result in an attack of lumbago for me. I went into the church and fetched a strip of brown matting which lay on the floor under the tower, where the bellringer stood. Then I sat down again and Maturin began :

“It was a fine morning near the end of May when Oliver Morton sat here. The sun shone and there was a light breeze from the west which set the sea sparkling. On Durdle reef there

was a thin belt of foam where the waves rolled gently over it. The grass on the downs was bright green, for there had been rain early in the month, and the sheep were feeding greedily. The curve of the cliffs was dazzling white.

“Oliver Morton looked round him with delight. He was a man whom beauty and brightness made glad; all beauty and all brightness of sea and land, or of the smiles of men and women, or of children at their play.

“After a while he unfolded the paper on his knee and read some verses set down there in his own handwriting, which was much decorated with flourishes and whirls.

“ ‘ A MADRIGAL  
TO BE SET MUSICALLY BY  
MASTER JOHN LAMB, OF SALISBURY.’

“This Master John Lamb,” said Maturin, “was the organist in the cathedral in those days and he was a good musician. He wrote anthems which were sung in the royal chapel and also made madrigals to be sung in harmony. He and Oliver Morton had been friends for many years.

“ ‘ What men love to-day  
That they hate to-morrow.  
Oh, folly, folly, silly folly.  
This is still the way.  
Hoped joys prove but sorrow.  
Oh, folly, folly, silly folly.  
Give us gain, we say,  
Fame, or Helen’s kisses.  
Oh, folly, folly, silly folly.  
He whose wishes stray,  
Sweet contentment misses.  
Oh, folly, folly, silly, silly folly.’

“ Morton read with some pleasure, but he was poet enough to feel dissatisfied. He scratched out a word here and there, wrote others instead of them and scratched again. Then with a sigh he turned the page. Polishing the written word was generally a business to his taste; but to-day he had a fresh song to write, a song which went intricately. He set the title down.

“ ‘ A LITTLE SONG UPON  
THE CHEERFULNESS OF A BROOK  
WHICH FLOWS MERRILY.’

“ After writing this he paused, touching his lips with the feather of his pen, while he thought of rhymes with which to express the simple merriment of the brook in its flowing.

“ ‘ The little brook it sings,  
And frets not over much  
At rocks which bend its way  
Or stones or any such-  
Like things,  
But always every day  
It sings.  
So should I go my way,  
Not angered by the tongues  
Or foolish deeds of men;  
But making still sweet songs  
All day.  
First here awhile and then  
Away.’

“ There he was interrupted. Sir Richard de Fresney, riding on a great horse, came through the gate of the Vicarage and paced slowly towards the church. Sir Richard was a man of weight in those days. He rode often to London, and, especially since the death of Queen Mary and the coming to the throne of the Princess

Elizabeth, he had been much absent from Bindon Parva. Late the night before he had reached the Manor House, and now, in the morning, he came down to the church, because he had news to give to Oliver Morton.

“‘It is the will of the Queen,’ he said, ‘that her new Prayer Book should be used in the churches on the Feast of St. John the Baptist and the day after.’

“Now this was great news, because Elizabeth had hesitated for awhile before declaring her policy, and there were some who hoped, as there were others who feared, that the old Mass might still be said commonly. Yet, though the news was of such high interest, Oliver Morton received it with a careless smile and made no comment. He fingered his pen as if he would rather be at his verse writing than discussing weighty matters.

“‘For my part,’ said Sir Richard, ‘I am a lover of the old ways, and all men know it of me that I would gladly worship as my fathers did. Yet the Queen——’ A puzzled frown gathered on his forehead. ‘The Queen——’

“‘Anne Boleyn’s daughter wishes to be head of the Church as her father was before her,’ said Morton with a little laugh.

“‘No,’ said Sir Richard, ‘she takes not that title. Nevertheless——’

“‘She takes the power maybe without the

title,' said Morton, still speaking lightly as of something which did not matter much.

“ ‘And if she does,’ said Sir Richard, ‘I say this. Though I do not love the new religion, I say this: Better an English monarch than an Italian priest for the head of the Church of England. For the ways of Rome are not our ways nor the ways of Spain either.’

“He spoke with a hint of anger in his voice. Englishmen then had no love for Spain, and were little inclined to endure quietly any foreign meddling or foreign insolence, whether Spanish or Italian.

“ ‘Though it may be,’ Sir Richard added, ‘that the Queen is over masterful.’

“ ‘It is still the fault,’ said Oliver Morton, ‘of maids and mares of that colour. The red, Sir Richard, betrays ever a fieriness of temper.’

“This light talk did not please Sir Richard. It was not seemly when the nation stood at the parting of the ways of her destiny that men should be jesting about the colour of a woman’s hair or the temper of a horse. He tugged at his beard, and looked hard at the priest who sat on the church bench beneath him.

“ ‘I would I knew your heart, Sir Oliver,’ he said at last, ‘whether you are Papalin or Evangelic.’

“ ‘Neither Papalin nor Evangelic,’ said Mor-

ton, 'but a humble follower of the muses whom I serve as best I may.'

"He looked at the paper on his knee with the rhymes about the brook on it. Sir Richard, still tugging at his beard, turned his horse's head and rode away.

"Oliver Morton took his pen again, but he wrote no more about the brook. A fresh fancy had taken him, and the muses whom he served were kindly. Words came easily.

" ' A MERRY CONCEIT  
TOUCHING THE DISPUTINGS IN THE CHURCH,  
WHEREIN THE TRUE WISDOM IS SET FORTH  
FOR THOSE WHO CAN READ ARIGHT.

' Older, deeper, wiser,  
Than dispute theologies  
And wrangling creeds the knowledge is  
Which comes from maidens' eyes or  
The touch of finger tips.

A great fault surely this is  
To spend all life in muddying  
Our minds with over studying,  
And never taste the kisses  
On Cytherea's lips.' "

Maturin paused when he finished reciting the verses, which he said with more feeling for the sense of them than I should have expected of him.

"That Oliver Morton of yours——" I said.  
"Did you say he was a priest?"

"The parish priest of Bindon Parva," said Maturin.

"He seems to have been what we call nowadays a 'bit of a lad,' " I said.

The expression puzzled Maturin. I explained what I meant as well as I could.

“Cytherea’s kisses,” I said, “are hardly what one would expect a man in his position to set his heart on. And I daresay there were several Cythereas, though one would be bad enough. Did he make a habit of kissing the village girls?”

“Oliver Morton,” said Maturin, “was not such as you suppose. He liked to see the village girls and boys dance on May day, or to catch glimpses of the lovelight in their eyes when they walked with hands entwined on summer evenings. It pleased him to see young Mistress Madeline, Sir Richard’s daughter, trip across the lawn at the Manor House in her brocade gown and gold embroidered shoes. But there was no scandal about his life. It was never said of him that he looked on wife or maid over tenderly. Only he loved all that was bright and gay, all that was full of life and the promise of it.”

“I’m glad to hear that,” I said. “All the same, if he’d published those verses of his he might very easily have been misunderstood. I should think that neither side—— What’s this he called them?”

“Papalin and Evangelic,” said Maturin. “The words have passed out of use now, but they were common then.”

“What I mean,” I said, “is that no respectable Papalin or Evangelic either would have approved of a man who preferred kisses to dis-

putate theology. Read me out some more of his verses, will you? ”

“ He wrote no more verses,” said Maturin, “ either then or afterwards. For while he thought about new rhymes there came a woman round the corner of the church. She came furtively, keeping close to the wall. Yet she came swiftly and it was plain that she had been running fast and far, for she breathed in short gasps, and there was sweat on her face. She was young and might have been comely enough to look upon, for her body was well formed. But she was very vilely clad in a short skirt of rough sacking reaching barely to her knees, which hung from her shoulders by two straps of cord. It was dirty, caked with mud and slime. It left uncovered the breasts which rose and fell as she panted. Her hair, loose about her neck, was tangled and matted. Her hands were rough and her arms much scratched with briars.

“ She flung herself on her knees before Morton and grasped at his feet with clawing hands. Her eyes were full of terror, the helpless terror of a beast driven to the slaughter-house which sees the pole-axe and smells the blood.

“ ‘ Save me, sir priest,’ she sobbed. ‘ Save me or they will slay me here and now.’ ”

“ Morton was a man of fastidious delicacy, and her touch offended him. He pulled his coat from

her grasp, and stood up drawing a little away from her. He knew who she was. The village people called her 'Wild Bess of Mupes,' and children went in superstitious dread of her. She lived in a little cave above a lonely beach, and no one knew how she lived or what she did, though there were stories that she practised black magic and had sold herself to Satan.

" 'They will kill me when they come on me. They will kill me horribly unless you save me, for they say that I am a witch.'

"From the side of the hill behind the church came the sound of voices, men's and women's voices, raised to shrill shouts, and the noise came nearer quickly. The woman looked round her wildly, thinking of further flight. But it was plain that she was spent and could run no more. Morton slipped past her, opened the door of the church and signed to her to enter.

" 'None will be able to come at you there,' he said.

"He closed the door upon her and turned to face the mob which chased her."

"There were some good points about that pagan creed of his," I said. "If he had been an Evangelic, or—what was the word? I've forgotten it again—or a Papalin, he would certainly have believed in witchcraft and joined merrily in the hunt."

“The crowd came round the corner of the church,” said Maturin, “shouting and yelling, their faces distorted with the lust of cruelty. At the head of them, dancing fantastically, was the idiot son of Bob the Smith, a slobbering lump of a boy with red-rimmed eyes in which were both stupidity and cunning. It filled Morton with disgust and a kind of fear to see faces so distorted with evil passions. Yet he faced the crowd calmly enough.

“‘What do you want here, my men?’ he said.

“He ignored the women, though they made the greater part of the crowd. It hurt him to see women turned into savage beasts, and there were young women and girls among them.

“‘We want Wild Bess the Witch,’ said one of the men.

“‘Wild Bess the Witch!’ shouted a woman. ‘She put a spell on Susan Bunce’s babe.’

“‘The babe peaks and pines since she touched him,’ said another.

“One voice followed another in angry accusation.

“‘She overlooked the cows and they go dry.’ ‘The butter in the churn comes not.’ ‘There are evil boils which break out upon the children.’ ‘There is distemper which . . .’ And so on. Nothing untoward had happened but Wild Bess with her witchcraft was to blame for it.

“ ‘She shall be stripped bare,’ shrieked a woman, ‘and tied to the tail of Bob Smith’s grey horse, and whipped from this to Wareham.’ ‘She shall run the gauntlet, and the women shall beat her with their besoms.’ ‘She shall be tied by the heels and dragged through the sea at the stern of Bunce’s boat, to see if the water will drown her.’ Threat after threat, and at each one Bob Smith’s idiot son chuckled and crowed with foul delight. On Morton the words fell like blows. Their bestiality sickened him.

“ ‘You shall not touch her,’ he said.

“Then he bethought him that his words would scarcely save her if the people guessed that she was in the church. While he stood warden no one would dare to push past him and enter the church. But he could not stay there day and night. Once he went away the people would certainly break in if they knew the woman was there. So he thought well to lie to them, though it humiliated him to have to lie to those whom he despised.

“ ‘She is not here,’ he said, ‘nor has she been here, nor have I seen her. Seek elsewhere.’

“The people muttered among themselves. But after awhile they believed him and went away.

“Morton stood gazing after them. There were men in the crowd who were friends of his, good fellows and kindly in the main. There were

women who curtseyed to him with smiling faces when he met them on the roads. And now all these folk, who seemed so sweet and gentle, were showing themselves to be beasts, far worse than beasts because of their delight in cruelty. He shuddered and went into the church.

“There the woman waited for him. She had recovered from her fear now that the danger was past for the moment. She had ordered her hair so that it no longer hung around her neck in tangles. She had wiped the sweat from her face. She had arranged her scanty garments with some poor attempt at coquettishness.

“‘They have gone,’ said Morton, ‘and now you can go in safety.’

“She looked at him with a sidelong glance and quickly lowered her eyes. She raised them again and met his with a sly look. There was a smile of provocation on her lips. A sudden sense of shame came on Morton. For all his pagan philosophy and his amorous verses, he was simple and innocent at heart. He did not know why he was ashamed or why her looks troubled him.

“‘What am I to gi’e thee, sir priest,’ she said, ‘in reward for all the lies that thou hast told for me?’

“‘I want nothing,’ he said. ‘Go in peace.’

“‘All men want something from a woman like me,’ she said. ‘And all want the same. Will I

gi'e thee a kiss, a good close clip and a kiss upon the mouth?'

"She moved towards him, leering at him, her head thrust forward, her lips pursed up. He shrank back a step and looked at her with a kind of fear.

" 'The man is bashfuller than any maid,' she said.

"Then she advanced to him with arms stretched wide. Morton pushed out his hands in front of him as if to ward her off.

" 'Nay,' she said, 'but the days of Papistry are over since Queen Mary died. It is no sin for a priest to kiss a wench in England now.'

"Morton backed away from her as she came. As he escaped her he kept saying, 'Go, woman, go.'

"This was no matter of resisting the devil and the flesh, for her allurements did not tempt him. To write about the kisses on Cytherea's lips was one thing. The hot breath of Wild Bess of Mupes was another.

" 'Go, woman, go,' he repeated. 'No more of it.'

"She understood at last that he would have nothing to do with her.

" 'And yet I am not so ill favoured neither,' she said. 'Other men have been glad enough to ask for what you refuse. Yes, of those that

cried out loudest against me to-day and would have slain me, there was scarce a man who has not——’

“ ‘Silence, woman, silence,’ said Morton. ‘This is the House of God.’ ”

“ ‘But their wives knew it not,’ said the woman. ‘Or maybe they did know and that was why they were so hot against me. But thou hast no wife to be afeard of. I think that thou art somewhat less than a man, sir priest, and so farewell to thee.’ ”

“ When she left him Morton sat down on one of the carved chairs which in those days stood within the altar rails. He was bewildered by the woman’s attack upon him, by the shamelessness of her approach, by the coarse immodesty of her gestures and her words.

“ In his time the little church was well cared for. Clean rushes strewed the floor. In the windows were pots of sweet smelling herbs, and all was very clean. On the altar were bunches of tall flowers. Morton loved to deck the church, and it was always gay as if for festival. So many were the flowers set upon the altar that the cross behind them, the silver cross set there by Sir Hugo, was hidden from sight. Morton spoke of God’s House to the woman, but what he felt was that her foulness had affronted the flowers, withering their loveliness, that her immodesty had outraged all the clean sweetness

of the place and soiled the very sunlight which streamed in.

“He had no heart to go back to his papers and to his verse making. He no longer wanted to look at the green downs and the sparkling sea. He sat there in the cool church thinking about the men and women outside, about their hate and cruelty, about the hideousness of their blood lust.

“‘And to think,’ his lips curled in fastidious scorn, ‘to think that the Redeemer died for such as these.’

“The crowd which had pursued the woman, and the woman whose pain they longed to see were alike horrible to him, creatures so base as to be less than human, to be matched only with the slobbering idiot, Bob Smith’s son, who had cackled and crowed at their obscenities.

“Then, as he sat there sick with contempt and disgust, there came certain words to him, so plainly from outside of himself that he was sure some voice had spoken them.

“‘My people and the sheep of My pasture.’

“Morton started in his chair and looked round to see the speaker. But there was no one. The church was empty as before, but a stray ray of sunshine shone suddenly on old Sir Hugo’s silver cross and Morton saw it gleam behind the flowers. His eyes rested upon it, fascinated. In a little while he saw no flowers, only the naked cross.

“ ‘ My people and the sheep of My pasture.’

“ The voice came again, clearer than before, as long ago the same Voice came to the infant Samuel. The meaning of the words seized Morton. It was an awful meaning, an intolerable burden laid upon him. These were God’s people and Christ’s sheep, all of them, the shameless woman who had tried to tempt him and the fierce crowd clamorous for her blood. They were not obscene idiots, but God’s people though gone astray.

“ With the knowledge of what these people were came an unbearable sense of his own responsibility. For the first time in his life he saw what he was and what his office was. He was the priest of these people, the shepherd of these sheep, and all their foulness and their lust were his fault. Their vileness was his vileness.

“ It was evening when he left the church. He gathered up his papers and his verses from the stone bench. At first he meant to tear them in pieces and strew them about among the graves. Then another thought came to him. He folded the papers carefully, took them into the church and laid them on the altar before the cross.”

“ Someone found them in the end,” I said.

“ I do not know,” said Maturin. “ While Oliver Morton lived they lay there.”

“ But someone must have found them,” I said,

“and published them. How else could you have repeated the verses to me to-day?”

“I do not know,” said Maturin, and the same puzzled look came on his face which I had seen there when I had questioned him about Sir Hugo’s sin. “I think he told me about the verses but I do not know.”

That, of course, was absurd; but I did not say so to Maturin. If the verses had not been published—I mean to ask some authority on Elizabethan literature about them—then Maturin must have made them up himself. Unless indeed some very old manuscript survived among the church records.

“That evening,” Maturin went on quietly, “Oliver Morton went up to the Manor House. There he found Sir Richard sealing a letter which he had written. It was to be despatched to London next day. It gave an account of the temper of the priests and people in Dorsetshire and of how they were minded about the Queen’s command and the new Prayer Book.

“‘I have written,’ said Sir Richard, ‘that no man knows your mind in these matters, Sir Oliver, save that you seem to care little either for the old religion or the new.’

“‘For Papalin and Evangelic I do not care at all,’ said Morton. ‘But I came here to-night to tell you this: Henceforth I mean to care for His people and the sheep of His pasture.’”

## IV

### RALPH GLENDINNING

I SUPPOSE I ought to be ashamed to confess it, but before I went to Bindon Parva I had never seen one of the secret rooms—priest's chambers—which are common enough in old English country houses. Maturin showed me one in Bindon Parva Manor House. It had survived the various burnings and the restorations of the house, and is still very much in what must have been its original condition. It rather surprised me. I always thought of these hiding places as little better than cupboards, holes without light or air, which the unfortunate fugitive reached by climbing up a chimney or squeezing through a narrow panel. The one Maturin showed me was a fair sized room, with a window, and you reached it by descending a spiral stairway, no narrower and no more inconvenient than those by which bell ringers ascend the towers of our churches. The top of the stairs was covered by a trap-door set in the floor of the library. A tall oak bookcase stood on top of the trap-door and effectually concealed it.

"This," I said to Maturin, "is a fairly comfortable room. I don't pity the man who spent a day or two in it. Do you suppose anyone ever did?"

"Ralph Glendinning once lived in it for months," said Maturin.

"Who was he?" I asked. "A Jesuit missionary? I didn't know the de Fresneys ever had dealings with that party."

"Ralph Glendinning," said Maturin, "was the vicar of the parish."

"And yet he had to go into hiding? Tell me about it."

We were in the secret chamber when I asked Maturin for the story, and whatever furniture had been in it in times past had been taken away. There was nothing to sit on but a window ledge, narrow from side to side, but, since the walls were thick, fairly deep. I took it. Maturin paced up and down the twelve feet of oak flooring while he talked.

"Very early in the morning," he began, "an hour before sunrise, a company of horsemen came riding over the ridge of the long hill which on its seaward side dips steep to the village."

"The hill I drove down when I came here from Wareham?"

"Yes," said Maturin. "But in those days there was no road, only a rough track. The men

and the horses they rode were weary. There were some among them whose great boots were slashed with sword cuts, whose coats were torn with pike thrusts. There were horses with bleeding flanks and men with limbs roughly bandaged. They had ridden all night and they had fought. Now, as they rode home, the horses stumbled and the men plucked at the bridle reins to save a fall. Yet they were not like broken men in flight from a lost battle. As they rode they sang, taking pitch and time from a young man, their leader, who rode in front.

“ ‘ March, march, march for the King,  
For the Church, for the King.  
Who speaks of doubts or fears?  
Pikemen and musketeers.  
March we and sing,  
For the Church and the King, for the King.’

“ Down the hill they rode by the zigzag track. Away to the left of them, a broken glimmer of grey water, lay the lagoons of Poole Harbour. To the south of it, off the head, were the tumbling waves of the race, for the tide was ebbing strongly and the wind came from the west. Below was the stretch of the channel, and cowering among the downs beside the chalk cliffs, was little scattered Bindon Parva.

“ The leader of the party shook his bridle rein and shouted loudly.

“ ‘ Ride, ride, ride for the King,  
For the Church, for the King.  
With swords bright for flashing,  
With swords red with slashing,  
Ride we and sing,  
For the Church and the King, for the King.’ ”

“ There had been slashing of swords that night. Ralph Glendinning had ridden out with such men as he could raise to raid the camp where the Puritans lay besieging Corfe Castle.”

English history is not my strongest subject, but I had heard of the siege and defence of Corfe Castle. What I had not heard of was any attempt to raise the siege. Maturin was evidently talking about some such enterprise and the leader was one Ralph Glendinning, presumably the man who hid in the priest's chamber.

“ But,” I said, “ I thought you told me that Ralph Glendinning was a parson. What was he doing there? ”

“ It was a gallant dash,” said Maturin, “ but futile. What could a handful of troopers do against the Puritan Army, a handful and a scratch handful at that. There were serving men and grooms from the Manor House, where Lady de Fresney lived with her two boys, a sad woman since her husband fell at Naseby. There were some men from the fields, no more eager for fighting than men of their kind ever are, yet willing enough to follow Ralph Glendinning.

There were some fishermen, of little skill as troopers but stout of heart, ready to strike for the Church and the King, or indeed against Church and King, if that appeal had been made to them. It was Lady de Fresney who armed the party from the store of munitions in the Manor House."

"But how did a parson come to be the leader of such an affair? Fighting wasn't his trade any more than it's yours."

Maturin seemed to me to have shirked answering this question when I asked it before. I felt justified in pressing him.

"It was Lady de Fresney who chose him as leader," said Maturin, "and he went willingly enough, for at that time he was a man who in his heart preferred striking blows to saying prayers. It was not his first fight. He had ridden to Naseby. He had ridden since. And if the little church was left for weeks and months with none to minister in it, Glendinning could quiet his conscience with the words of his song. It was for Church and King. Does a man do wrong when he strikes for Church and King? On his boots and his leather jacket there were damp brown patches as he rode down the hill that morning. The hilt of his sword was slimy wet. Is the blood of the foes of Church and King a

stain on the soul of man or priest? Ralph Glendinning thought not.

“One thing more Lady de Fresney did for the raiding party when it rode forth. She sent her elder son to ride beside Glendinning, a boy of sixteen years, fair-haired, tall and merry and much beloved.

“The party rode down the hill and sang. They had need to sing. Especially Glendinning had need to sing in order to turn his thoughts away from other things. The blood on his boots and his coat did not trouble him, nor the slimy feel of the sword hilt when he laid his hand upon it. But the trooper behind him led a riderless horse, and somewhere, hacked and disfigured, lay the body of young de Fresney, the boy who had ridden out laughing. He was left behind in a fosse of Cromwell’s camp. Further back in the troop was another led horse. Young Bunce, the fisherman, had ridden it. Bunce would ride no more, nor drag his boat up the stony beach when the storms came from the west, nor go upon the sea in summer time.

“They reached the bottom of the hill. They rode past the tall grey gates of the Manor House. They passed the scattered houses of the village. Glendinning set spurs to his horse. With a clattering trot his troop followed him. Once more he sang :

“ ‘ Strike, strike, strike for the King,  
For the Church, for the King.  
Brave men like you,  
Loyal and true,  
Strike all and sing,  
For the Church and the King, for the King.’

“ In the cottages the singing was heard and the tramp of the horses and the jangling of arms. Women, awakened from sleep, pulled the blankets over their ears and whispered prayers. Children turned in their cots and cried. Old men crept to the windows and peered out. There was fear in their hearts. The sound of the singing came to the Manor House faintly, too faintly to stir a sleeper, but loud enough to reach the ears of Lady de Fresney, where she knelt, a muffled figure, before a cross set on the little table in a corner of her room.

“ The troop rode on, across the field towards Glendinning’s house. They passed the church, and there for a moment they halted. Glendinning drew his sword and raised it in salute. The half-dried blood on the hilt of it oozed through his fingers, tightened in the grasp. The men followed his example, saluting the church with drawn swords. Why not? They had fought for Church and King.

“ The troop rode on, singing again, but raggedly, for Glendinning’s voice no longer led them. At the door of the Vicarage they halted. Horses were stabled or picketed. Men stretched

stiff limbs, loosened belts, laid aside steel caps. From inside the house Glendinning and another rolled out a barrel of strong ale. It was tapped and the men drank eagerly, from cups and horns and squat, round-bellied jugs. Glendinning brought out bread and meat, brown loaves and boiled beef and salted pork. The men ate ravenously and drank again. One and another pledged Church and King, or called for confusion and hell on the enemies of Church and King. One and another sang a snatch of some wild song. One after another they lay down and slept.

“The sun rose and shone on them. Its level rays burst through the eastward-looking windows of the house and shone on Glendinning where he lay asleep on his bed.

“With the brightening of the morning the village people came from their cottages. They met and asked each other questions, timidly, doubtingly. How had the matter gone? The old men asked that and the boys. Who had come back? That was what the women asked. Old women asked it whose sons had ridden out, and young women with babes in their arms, thinking of the fathers of the babes.

“In little companies of three and four they went up to the parson’s house. They saw the picketed horses and the sleeping men. Very

quietly, on tiptoe the women wandered among the sleepers. They looked to see who was there and who was not. Now and again when some sleeper lay upon his face, a woman knelt down beside him and peered close to make sure if he were indeed her John, her Jim, her Bob. Where one lay, as sleepers do, with an arm bent across his face, a woman would raise the arm, gently for fear of waking him, and gaze at his face. So they went, searching, laying now and then a kiss on mouth or cheek of some sleeper, muttering now and then a low 'Thank God.'

"Then suddenly there rose a cry, a single wail, long-drawn, pitiful, like that of a wild creature who sees death near. Susan Bunce had made the round of the sleepers twice with fear that grew to despair and had not seen her man. Six months before she stood with him at the altar in the church while Glendinning spoke the words that made her wife. For six months she had lived with him in his little cabin near the sea. The twisted frames of his lobster pots lay round the door. His lines and hooks were coiled in a creel at the fireside. The rough gear of his boat, tattered brown sails, heavy oars, frayed ropes, lay piled in a corner near the bed in which they slept. He would use none of them again, nor speak to her, nor take her in his arms and hold her tight.

“The other women came to her, whispering time-worn, useless phrases of comfort, speaking words of hope, which were unbelieved and unbelievable. They put their arms around her. They tried to lead her away, but she burst from them, pushing them off. She ran into the house. She passed from place to place, flinging doors open, slamming them behind her. Tripping and stumbling over steps, she came to the room where Glendinning slept. She seized him by the arm and shook him roughly.

“ ‘Where’s my man?’ she cried, ‘my man that went with you?’

“Glendinning stirred, raised his head and swept aside the long hair which had fallen across his face. He opened his eyes and saw her. He sat up and stared.

“ ‘Give me back my man,’ she cried. ‘Give him back to me.’

“Glendinning knew her as he knew every man, woman and child in Bindon Parva, and he knew that neither he nor anyone could ever give her back her man. A great sob shook him. Six hours before he had seen men reel, fall and die when he struck at them. He had laughed. Six hours before, seeing this man Bunce dragged from his horse, and stabbed, he had muttered ‘a good man gone’ and then struck again. Now that he saw before him a passionate wild woman,

brown-skinned, her hands cracked with toil, unkempt, untaught, heartbroken ; a creature like so many others that her very existence mattered nothing to the world, but heartbroken. A man may laugh, cheer, sing, as he fights. There is no laughter and little cheering, small desire to sing afterwards.

“ Glendinning stood up and laid his hand on the girl’s shoulder. She shuddered and drew away.

“ ‘ I cannot give him back to you,’ he said, ‘ for he is dead, but Sue ’—he leaned towards her and took her hand—‘ he died for Church and King.’

“ She flung his hand away.

“ ‘ What’s Church or King to him or me?’ she said. ‘ I want no Church or King. I want my man.’

“ ‘ For Church and King,’ said Glendinning. ‘ A man dies well for Church and King.’

“ He would have died himself for Church and King. Yet the words came from his lips falteringly. The woman who stared at him with wild, angry eyes did not understand what he meant by Church and King, or what loyalty was, or honour, or the high call of duty. What could he say to her?

“ Suddenly the anger died out of her eyes and the tears came.

“ ‘I loved him so,’ she said. ‘I loved him. Oh, I loved him so.’

“Then Glendinning, priest, gentleman and soldier, understood that the dim soul of the wailing creature before him knew something which he did not know, that there is something greater yet than faith and loyalty, than Church and King.

“The village women, stealing in half-frightened, came round the girl and took her away. He followed them to the door of his house. The men who had slept were awake then. They were sitting among their friends talking, sometimes laughing.

“Across the field, from the gate of the Manor House, came Lady de Fresney. Behind her walked two of her serving-maids, carrying linen and balms and cordials and wine and fine kinds of food for the succouring of those who had been wounded. She spoke to these two girls and bade them go among the men. She herself came slowly forward to where Glendinning stood, and he grew cold for fear of meeting her and with the thought of what he had to tell.

“She greeted him with outstretched hands and a little tremulous smile of welcome on her lips. He took her hand in his and bent low over it, holding it for a long time. He dreaded the moment when he must raise his head and look

her in the face and tell her that her son was dead. Very gently she drew her hand from his grasp, and he, nerving himself to his task, stood upright. While he sought for words in which to tell her, she spoke.

“ ‘I know,’ she said.

“ ‘Then, since she knew the worst, words came to him and he burst out eagerly.

“ ‘Madam, I would have brought him back to you if I could. Indeed, I fought for him to save him. Madam, as God sees me I would have died in his place if I could.’

“ ‘All this was true. During the confused fighting in the dark, when the little handful of horsemen had made their mad charge, Glendinning had seen the boy fall. He had caught a second glimpse of him defending himself on foot. Hacking and slashing at the men who pressed round him, digging spurs rowell deep into his horse’s sides until the maddened beast plunged and reared; shouting, cursing in worse than Berserker rage, Glendinning had striven to reach the lad and had failed.

“ ‘I would have saved him if I could,’ he sobbed.

“ ‘I know,’ she said.

“ ‘And some peace came to him when he knew that she believed him, believed that he had done his best.

“ ‘I feared to tell you,’ he said. ‘God knows how I dreaded telling you.’

“ ‘But I knew,’ she said. ‘I was praying while you fought, and while I knelt before the cross—oh, hours and hours ago—I knew that he had fallen.’

“ Glendinning’s courage came back to him, and with it the sense that he was a man, young and strong, that she was a frail woman, that he must support and strengthen her.

“ ‘The boy died,’ he said, ‘as his father died, for Church and King.’

“ ‘For Church and King.’ She repeated the words after him, but in a strange distant voice, as if her thoughts were not with what she said.

“ ‘I am a foolish woman,’ she went on, ‘foolish and broken and old; but it seems to me that there must be some better way than fighting. Church and King. God’s Church. The Lord’s Anointed. I know. I know. But when He came to me last night and told me that my boy was dead—— It was He who came. I knew it by the peace which came with Him. He made me raise my eyes, tenderly compelled me to raise my eyes to the cross before which I knelt, and a voice spoke in me—His voice—which said : “By this I conquer. My cross is mightier than the sword.” ’

“ She paused, and he, the priest, stood silent

before her with the bloodstains on his coat and the blood caked hard and black upon his hands.

“‘I am a foolish woman,’ she said softly, ‘and I do not understand. I know that you are loyal, brave and true, a cavalier. But—but—were you not Christ’s soldier before you were the King’s?’”

“While she still spoke, a sudden call came from a man who stood in one of the further groups upon the lawn. All looked at him. He stood with finger pointed to the hill behind the village. Men and women stared to where he pointed. Down the zigzag path along which Glendinning had led his men there came riding slowly a long line of grim troopers. The Puritan general was not the man to suffer the stings of wasps without an effort to destroy their brood. Raids on his camp like Glendinning’s were a pest and an insult besides. Within two hours of the departure of the Cavaliers he had men on the march to Bindon Parva, men of discipline, Iron-sides.

“There was movement among the men in front of Glendinning’s Vicarage. Some hurried off, dragged into a run by women who clung to them. Some went slowly with heavy faces. Some paused, turned back, shook their fists and hurled curses at the regiment which came riding down the hill. They went fast or slow, in panic or

sullenly, but all went. The force that came was too strong for them and they knew it.

“Glendinning and Lady de Fresney were left alone.

“‘Well,’ he said, ‘they have me now, for I cannot fight and will not fly. Whether it is right or wrong to draw sword for Church and King I shall draw it no more. That is over.’

“But she was not content that he should stand there and be taken. Reasoning with him and imploring, she made him follow her up to the Manor House. There she hid him in this little chamber.”

Maturin looked round him. I tried to realise what the scene must have been like. The dragging of the great bookcase from the trap-door by the lady and her maids while Glendinning, half unwilling to be hidden, stood aside. His descent of the winding stairs, impelled by the lady’s imploring words and the pushing hands of the maids. The hurried gathering of some store of food and wine, the breathless efforts to replace the bookcase before the troopers came. I suppose it was the way Maturin told the story, his conviction of the truth of every detail, which stimulated my imagination.

“The Puritan soldiers,” Maturin went on, “sought for him, calling him a priest of Baal and clamouring for his blood. But they did not

find him, and after awhile they thought that he must surely have taken flight. Gradually the search for him died down.

“For months afterwards there were soldiers in the village, some billeted in the cottages, but most of them living in the Manor House. They shed no blood, though they would have killed Glendinning had they found him. They did little damage save to the church. There they broke down the statue of the Blessed Virgin which stood over the tomb of the first Lady de Fresney. Old Sir Hugo the *peccator miserrimus* put it there. They pounded it into small fragments, calling it a golden calf, which it was not, and saying that like Moses they would grind it to powder and sprinkle it on the water and make the people drink it. But this they could not do because stone is hard to grind. Only when they had broken it they threw the fragments into the sea. Also they took away a silver chalice which they found and made great mockery of the altar hangings and some tapestries. They even tried to worship in the church after their own fashion with long ranting prayers and sermons in which they ranted more and drawling singing of their fighting psalms. But there was something in the place which was too strong for them, some virtue of another creed, long abiding memories in the very stones. They could not pray or preach there

as they were wont to pray and preach. So they left it, saying that it was an idolatrous temple and accursed. After that for a while the church stood deserted, none of the people daring to enter it for fear of the anger of the troopers.

“When the vigilance of the troopers had slackened and they had lost all hope of finding Glendinning, he and Lady de Fresney made a plan. They had talked much together in the little chamber whenever she could safely come to him, and he, during his long hours of solitude, had thought much of what she said to him on the morning after the fight, about his being Christ’s soldier before he was the King’s.

“There was in her a great desire for the services of the church and especially for the Blessed Sacrament, consecrated in a holy place. In him there was a like desire, but more passionate than hers, an uncontrollable hunger for sacred words and sacred things in sacred places.

“So they planned together to go back to the deserted church. And they did go.

“There is a time, very early, two hours or so before dawn, when men who have beds to sleep in sleep sound. Then Cromwell’s troopers, soaked with strong ale and good wine from the cellars of the Manor House, slept very sound. At that hour one morning Lady de Fresney stole silently from the house, and, moving through the

trees of the park, went down unseen to the church. Ralph Glendinning crept from his hiding-place with great caution and went to the church after her. They dared not venture to have a light. Even an altar taper might have betrayed them to prying eyes. But the want of light mattered little. Glendinning could say the long familiar words by heart. She, kneeling near him could reply and lift her heart up to the Lord.

“They went again and yet again, and after awhile, growing bolder, they went every day. So the King was prayed for by his name in Bindon Parva, and the boy who fell that night below Corfe Castle was prayed for, that God might have him in safe keeping, and his father who died before him for Church and King. And Bunce the fisherman and the girl wife who mourned him were prayed for. Also, though they did not say it to each other, these two prayed for the soul of the priest whose hands had been stained with blood, whose lips had cried out blasphemies and cursings when the spirit of the fight was in him, in the days when he forgot that he was Christ’s soldier before he was the King’s.”

## V

### FELIX BRANDON

WE were standing in the porch of the church one evening. On the wall, above a fluttering display of income tax and rate collectors' notices, was a painted board with the names of Maturin's predecessors on it in red letters. It began with Hugh Freyne, spelled as he spelt it before he became Lord of the Manor. A good way further down was the name of Oliver Morton, and then, with several in between, that of Ralph Glendinning.

"Tell me, Maturin," I said, "do you know the biographies of all your predecessors?"

"Of most of them," he said, "I know nothing except their names. They do not come here any more."

"Come here?"

"To the church," said Maturin.

"Do you mean to say that some of them do," I said, "that they actually come here and talk to you?"

Maturin shied away from that question, and though I put it to him again he would not answer it. There was really no need that he should.

I was beginning to understand what he meant by that daily Mass of his and who made up the congregation to whom he thought he ministered.

“Which is the next you know anything about?” I asked.

Maturin laid his finger on the name of Felix Brandon.

“That man,” he said, “was a great preacher.”

“His gift was rather wasted in Bindon Parva, I should think,” I said. “He ought to have been somewhere else.”

“So he thought himself,” said Maturin, “and he might have been a famous man if he had ministered in some city church. But here, as you say, his gift was wasted. Yet there was one sermon which he preached here——”

Maturin paused, and I did not encourage him to go on. It did not seem likely to me that one of Felix Brandon’s sermons would be interesting. But Maturin was not discouraged by my silence. He began his story.

“One Sunday morning Felix Brandon thundered from the pulpit.

“He had a great voice, a voice which would have been valuable to the captain of a ship who had to give orders in the middle of a raging storm. It was far too big a voice for Bindon Parva church. He had a store of energy almost as great as his voice. This found outlet, when

he preached, in vigorous gesticulation. He waved his arms, thrust out accusing hands towards his congregation and imploring hands towards heaven. He brought down a clenched fist with a sounding thwack on an outspread palm. He was a preacher who might well have kept the most apathetic congregation awake. But the Bindon Parva fishermen were used to him. So were their wives and children. Many of them slept quietly all through his thunderings, regarding sermon time as a heaven ordained period of rest, special Sabbath rest. Others, who did not actually sleep, lapsed into a kind of trance, almost as restful as slumber itself."

This is very much the way Maturin's parishioners behave now. I had seen them settle down and shut their eyes. Indeed the second Sunday I went to church in Bindon Parva I did not hear more than sixty words of Maturin's sermon, having myself dropped off into a very pleasant doze.

"On that particular Sunday morning," said Maturin, "Felix Brandon thundered louder than usual, and preached longer. He preached for an hour and a quarter instead of his usual hour. His discourses were always garnished with Latin quotations. That day the Latin was as thick as plums in a Christmas pudding. Almost every paragraph ended with a quotation. Even his

gesticulations, though this is difficult to believe, were more violent than they had ever been before.

“Felix Brandon was doing his best, but even his best failed to rouse his congregation to interest. Of those present in the church only two listened to what the preacher said. One of these was Sir Edward de Fresney, Lord of the Manor, squire of the parish, the greatest personage in Bindon Parva. The other was a very fashionably dressed gentleman who sat beside Sir Edward in the Manor House pew. This was Lord Eveleigh, a stranger in Bindon Parva, who was paying a visit to Sir Edward.

“The subject of the sermon was the horrible Popish plot which Dr. Titus Oates had brought to light, thereby confounding Romish traitors and making secure the lives and properties of all true Protestant Englishmen. Felix Brandon knew all about it, for he had been in London three weeks and had ridden down to his parish, reaching it on Saturday afternoon, full of the great news and frothing with excitement. It was no wonder that he preached powerfully. The astonishing thing was that his congregation took no interest either in the news or in his comments upon it. For all the Bindon Parva people knew or cared, he might have preached his whole sermon, instead of only about a fifth of it, in Latin.

“Only Sir Edward and Lord Eveleigh paid attention. Sir Edward listened at first with a slight smile, then, as the preacher gathered force, with a frown, finally with a look of anxiety on his face. Lord Eveleigh smiled the whole time, but towards the end of the discourse his smile became a kind of fixed and frozen grin, and that though he eased his facial muscles from time to time by taking pinches of snuff.

“Felix Brandon, conscious of a good cause, remained unaware of the disapproval of his two listeners. He piled epithets on the plot. It was desperate and abominable, bloody, sacrilegious, blasphemous, seditious, devilish, malignant, cruel, damned, and much besides. It had been devised by vile Papists for the undoing of the King, the laws and liberties of England. This end would be accomplished by the massacre of all Protestants, the destruction of their property, the rape of their wives, and the torture of their little children with thumbscrews, racks and other instruments of the infamous Inquisition of Spain. Dr. Titus Oates had discovered this plot, and Felix Brandon thoroughly believed in it.

“He passed on from his denunciation of the plot and the plotters to a florid eulogy of Dr. Oates, the fearless champion of Protestantism—*‘Justum et tenacem propositi virum’*—whom

no '*civium ardor*,' minatory popular outcry, could shake in his settled purpose. The quotation was not perhaps one of the preacher's most felicitous efforts. At that moment the popular clamour was all on the side of Dr. Oates, and the people who had to stand firm against the storm were the unfortunate Papists and their friends. Sir Edward, who knew his Horace, shrugged his shoulders at the recitation of the ode. Lord Eveleigh gave way to a slight titter at the preacher's suggestion that Charles II was an *instans tyrannus*. Surely never was any monarch less of a threatening tyrant than he was. Lord Eveleigh, courtier and friend of the King, had every opportunity of knowing his master's character. '*Instans tyrannus!*' He touched Sir Edward with his elbow and tittered again.

"Felix Brandon went on to exhort his congregation. He wanted them to gird their loins, to light their lamps, to search for, discover and destroy all Papists, open and secret. He told them that unless they did these things they would not be able to sleep easy in their beds. He said that at that moment no true Englishman could sleep easy in his bed."

"Perhaps," I said, "that was true. If so, it would help to account for the way the Bindon Parva people slept in their pews. Men who have

lain awake all night are liable to drop off during the day even in uncomfortable places.”

Maturin recognised this feeble joke with a puzzled little smile, and then went on with his story just as if I had not spoken.

“For his own part—the preacher left his two hearers in no doubt about this—Felix Brandon meant to be instant in the pursuit of any Papist who crossed his path. Like the justice of the Romans he might be lame but—— Sir Edward anticipated the quotation and was not disappointed: ‘*raro antecedentem* . . .’

“The sermon ended at last, seventy-five long minutes after it began, and the preacher, panting a little and sweating profusely, gave the Benediction from the pulpit. The congregation awoke and stood up while Sir Edward and Lord Eveleigh walked down the church. This was their expression of respect for the Lord of the Manor and his friend. Felix Brandon paid the same tribute. He stood in his pulpit, mopping his face with a red handkerchief until Sir Edward had passed through the porch. After that there was something of a scramble in the church. Men, women and children were eager to get away quickly to their dinners, their houses and their play. Felix Brandon, as eager as any, shouldered his way among them to the vestry under the tower in order to get rid of his surplice.

It was his privilege, a perquisite of his office and position, to dine in the Manor House after service on Sundays. He had no wish to miss part of the feast by being late.

“Sir Edward and Lord Eveleigh entered the Park through a wicket gate in the wall, a gate of which Sir Edward kept the key, and which he rarely used except on Sundays when he went to church.

“‘Well, de Fresney,’ said Lord Eveleigh, ‘that parson of yours is in full cry seemingly with the rest of the pack on the scent of us poor Papists. . . .’

“‘I am sorry,’ said Sir Edward, ‘that you should have been forced to listen to that rhodomontade. If I had known—— But it seemed better that you should come to church with me. The people here are well enough. They neither know nor care anything about plots or Papists. But the parson——! It was better that he should see you in church, but I am sorry that he belaboured you and your faith with so many hard words.’

“‘Better listen to a sermon from your parson,’ said Lord Eveleigh, ‘than to the testimony of Dr. Oates and his perjured witnesses. Better sit in your church than stand in the prisoner’s dock. That is what I should be doing and that is the kind of discourse I should be listening to if I had

stayed in London. I shall be able to hold my head up again in London after awhile,' he said with a gentle smile, 'in spite of all the hard blows your parson aimed at it. I should scarcely have lifted it again after the doctor had borne witness to my complicity in the plot, for'—with the light swish he carried he flicked the top off a tall thistle which grew at the side of the path—'once a man's head is off it does not grow again.'

" 'I think,' said Sir Edward, 'that you are safe enough here.'

" 'Unless your parson is as good as his word,' said Lord Eveleigh. 'What was it he said about lighting his lamp and taking his sword.'

" 'He dare do nothing,' said Sir Edward, 'and I think he would not wish to do any harm to a guest of mine, for he is a good enough man at heart though a fool.'

" 'They are all fools together,' said Lord Eveleigh, 'but I have no fancy for a lodging in the Tower.'

" 'Brandon will do no harm,' said Sir Edward, 'to any friend of mine. Besides, he does not know who you are, and he saw you in church to-day broad awake and listening to his sermon. It will not cross his mind but that you approve of every word he said.'

" 'Indeed Bindon Parva seemed a secure enough place in which to wait until the madness which

possessed the mob in London had passed away. It was quiet and retired, out of the way of travellers and far from London. Sir Edward was master there and no man in the parish or near it dare dispute his will. He was besides known as a Churchman and no Papist, so that however the Protestant frenzy grew there was little likelihood of an inquisition into his affairs.

“It was true that Lord Eveleigh was well known as a Papist and was a noted figure in the King’s court. He was, therefore, a plain mark for the supporters of the agitation about the plot. His disappearance from London would be known and commented on. But his house and estate were in the north part of the county. There he would be sought if he were sought at all. No one had any reason to think that he had taken refuge in Bindon Parva.

“Felix Brandon had his dinner in the Manor House that day as usual. There he was introduced to a Mr. Eve, who complimented him on his sermon, saying that he had heard no finer discourse from any pulpit, even in London. This pleased the preacher mightily, and he fell to wondering who Mr. Eve might be, whether perhaps he might be a man with some piece of preferment in his gift, or perhaps one who would speak to those who had preferment in their gift. Felix Brandon was not a very greedy or an

ambitious man, but he could not help knowing that his powers and ability were somewhat wasted in Bindon Parva.

“Sir Edward also praised the sermon, and afterwards questioned Brandon about the news from London and how the proceedings against the plot went on. The parson was pleased enough to talk and had much to say. He had been, so it appeared, a great deal in the company of Dr. Oates’ friends, and had even come to speech once with the great doctor himself. Of this he boasted, and, as the manner of such men is, made good his boast of intimacy with the great by repeating things which he supposed to be secret and private. In fact, though they regarded him as a good enough Protestant, neither Dr. Oates nor any of his friends would have trusted Brandon with a secret. He was too plainly a talkative, simple and foolish man. But they did tell him, in whispers as if they were secrets, many things which were in reality common talk in London.

“All these, in his simple pride, he told Sir Edward. Especially he made much of the information that Lord Eveleigh was known to be deep in the plot, that he had fled from London, but that no doubt he would soon be arrested and tried for his life.

“‘This Lord Eveleigh,’ he said, ‘is an open

Papist and has always been so. It is said that he is ever at the King's side, speaking in the King's ear, which makes him the more dangerous.'

" 'Perhaps then,' said Lord Eveleigh, 'the King will protect him.'

" 'The King,' said Brandon, 'will have enough to do to protect himself. It is said, and believed——'

" 'But Sir Edward held up his hand and stopped this speech.

" 'I am a loyal man, Mr. Parson,' he said. 'My father and my brother died for their King. It does not beseem me to hear scandal about mine.'

" 'Then Brandon was all apology. He had meant no disloyalty. He was true in thought and word to King and Church. He only meant—— Indeed he did not mean—— His words must not be understood to mean——'

" 'In fact, you meant nothing at all,' said Sir Edward.

" 'Nothing,' said Brandon. 'God forbid that I should mean anything against the King.'

" 'Felix Brandon went home after dinner very well satisfied both in body and mind. He had eaten well and drunk well. He had in his pocket a bottle of wine from which scarce a glass had been taken. Sir Edward had pressed that on

him when no one would drink more after dinner. He had—what was better than a full belly and a bottle of wine—a fine dream to think about. He was convinced, by the manner and bearing of the man, that Mr. Eve was a man of high station and great importance in the world. And Mr. Eve had commended his morning sermon, not only once nor twice. Brandon thought how well his voice would roll along the nave and through the aisles of some great London church, how courtiers and fine ladies would flock to hear him preach. He built his castles in the air as he walked home through the park. He went on building castles, more and more splendid while he sat in his room at the Vicarage. In the end he built himself a Bishop's Palace, and all the foundation stones were the words which Mr. Eve had spoken in praise of his sermon.

“At six o'clock he went to the church to say evensong. At that service he did not preach, very sensibly holding that one good sermon is enough in any parish for the week. Besides few people came to the evening service, and it seemed not worth while to waste fine oratory on a handful of old women who would not understand what was said to them.

“But that evening Brandon was half minded to preach. While he was reading the first lesson there came two gentlemen into the church, and

he recognised one of them. This was Captain Knowles, whom Brandon had met in London, one of Dr. Oates' chosen friends, a man devoted to the exposure of the plot. He had done much, though not so much as some others, in the way of searching out Papists, confessed or hidden and bearing witness against them. It was he who had talked most to Brandon in London and had told him about Lord Eveleigh. The other gentleman, who entered the church along with Captain Knowles, Brandon did not know, but he had no doubt that he too was one of the unmaskers of the plot.

“It seemed to Brandon a pity not to preach with two such men for audience. And he could have preached. Though he had not with him the notes of his morning sermon, nor the Latin quotations, all written out, yet he felt that he could preach that sermon over again. He almost made up his mind to do so, thinking of the honour he would win when so important a champion of Protestantism as Captain Knowles heard him preach. He actually would have preached the sermon but for the behaviour of Captain Knowles and his friend. They fidgetted and coughed. Their sword scabbards clattered noisily on the floor. Finally they rose and walked about the church. It was plainly impossible to preach to men in such a mood. Brandon with a sigh of

disappointment closed the Prayer Book at the end of evening prayer.

“Captain Knowles waited for Brandon in the church and greeted him when he came out of the vestry. The stranger’s name was Lake, Samuel Lake. It appeared that he too was a Captain, and Knowles introduced him as one active in the exposure of the plot.

“‘We have ridden down here on important business,’ said Knowles, ‘and would be glad of a word in private with you, for we know you to be a sound friend of the Protestant cause.’

“Brandon was that, and glad to profess it. He was also flattered that Captain Knowles had thought it worth while to ride all the way down to Bindon Parva to consult him on private business. He invited both men into his Vicarage, and set before them the bottle of wine which Sir Edward had given him after dinner. It was good wine and he was pleased to have it to offer to two such important people.

“‘It has come to our knowledge,’ said Captain Knowles, ‘that Lord Eveleigh is here in Bindon Parva. There is a warrant out for his arrest which I hold, and I have sufficient force of men at call to enforce the warrant should any resistance be made.’

“‘Lord Eveleigh!’ said Brandon astonished.

“‘Ay, Lord Eveleigh, a notorious Papist,

against whom both I and Captain Lake are prepared to swear such things as will make it impossible for anyone, even the King, to protect him.'

" 'But Lord Eveleigh is not here,' said Brandon.

" 'He is here,' said Captain Knowles, 'housed and hidden by Sir Edward de Fresney.'

"Then Brandon thought of Mr. Eve and he began to be afraid. If Sir Edward's guest was to be arrested in Bindon Parva, taken from the very Manor House, Brandon did not want to have anything to do with the matter. He had an uncomfortable feeling that Sir Edward's guest was in some way his guest too, and that he would be guilty of a kind of treachery if he helped Captain Knowles and Captain Lake.

" 'What sort of man is this Lord Eveleigh?' he asked.

"He had little doubt that Lord Eveleigh and Mr. Eve were one and the same, but he wanted to make quite sure and he also wanted to gain time, so that he could think out what was best to be done. Already he began to feel that he must somehow warn Sir Edward of his guest's peril.

" 'A tall man,' said Captain Knowles, 'upwards of six feet in stature, with a fair skin and blue eyes. He has a thin nose and a long upper

lip. On the back of his right hand is a white scar where a rapier ripped the skin in some duel that he fought.'

"The description left no doubt in Brandon's mind that his 'Mr. Eve' was the man of whom Knowles was speaking. He had noticed the scar running from the index finger to the wrist of his right hand.

" 'There is,' he admitted, 'a Mr. Eve in the Manor House who is such as you describe, but he cannot be a Papist, for he was in church this morning, and moreover he greatly praised the sermon which I preached which dealt with the plot very straightly.'

" 'The Papists are as cunning as foxes,' said Knowles, 'and will adopt any disguises to save their skins.'

" 'Even as Satan himself,' said Captain Lake, 'will take the semblance of an angel of light.'

" 'Nevertheless,' said Knowles, 'we are sure of our man and mean to take him. But it is not concerning him that we wish to speak to you. Our business with you is other. Of what spirit is Sir Edward de Fresney?'

" 'Sir Edward is a good Churchman,' said Brandon hurriedly.

" 'I would you had said good Protestant,' said Lake. 'I mistrust that word Churchman.'

“‘It is the same,’ said Brandon; ‘Churchman or Protestant, what difference?’

“‘Yet,’ said Captain Knowles, ‘this Sir Edward is a harbourer of Papists. He has Lord Eveleigh in his house now.’

“‘But I think he knows not that it is Lord Eveleigh?’ said Brandon.

“He did not believe that, and had little expectation that the other two would believe it. Sir Edward knew who his guest was well enough, though he chose to call him Mr. Eve.

“‘I have also a warrant for the arrest of Sir Edward de Fresney,’ said Knowles. ‘Besides being a harbourer of Papist fugitives, he is also one of those who goes about to stifle the plot, throwing doubt on the Protestant witnesses and making an unholy mockery of the great peril in which the nation stands.’

“Now this, as Brandon knew, was likely enough to be true. Sir Edward was a man of cool and independent mind, not easily moved to believe in things because other men believed them, always distrustful of the judgment of the crowd. He was besides a man who spoke out what was in his mind without caring much who heard him. He might have spoken against Dr. Oates. He might even have made jokes about the plot.

“‘Yet,’ said Captain Knowles, ‘I am un-

willing to arrest Sir Edward unless I can make sure of strong evidence against him. Captain Lake can swear——’

“ ‘I can swear,’ said Lake, ‘that I know him to be a disguised Papist.’

“ ‘And I can give evidence myself to that same purpose,’ said Knowles. ‘Yet——’

“ ‘He looked long and searchingly at Brandon.

“ ‘Yet,’ he went on, ‘there will be strong influence at work to save Sir Edward, and—well, to speak plain, Captain Lake’s evidence has of late been somewhat blown upon.’

“ ‘I swear to what I know,’ said Lake, ‘but an evil and perverse generation——’

“ ‘I myself can testify,’ said Knowles, ‘and though I know much against him, yet it might be made to appear that my knowledge is not trustworthy since I have never met the man. But if we had some evidence against him from one who knows him well and has been often in his company, especially if we had the testimony of a man of high character who has not hitherto borne witness about the enormities of the plot—if that could be obtained it would go hard with Sir Edward.’

“ ‘Brandon understood, and yet greatly wished not to understand what Knowles was aiming at.

“ ‘There is no one,’ he said, ‘who can bear witness against Sir Edward in the way you wish.’

“ ‘I think,’ said Knowles, ‘that you might.’

“This time it was not possible even to pretend to misunderstand. Knowles had made his meaning too plain. Brandon revolted from it. He was a fool. He was also a very vain man. But he was neither a liar nor a betrayer of his friends.

“ ‘I will do no such thing,’ he said. ‘I would not perjure myself to save Sir Edward. Most assuredly I shall not do so in order to have him unjustly condemned.’

“ ‘Yet it might be for your own good if you did,’ said Captain Lake. ‘There are those who would pay well——’

“ ‘Hush,’ said Knowles.

“He was wiser than his companion and he knew that Brandon could not be persuaded in that way.

“ ‘There are those in England,’ he said, ‘men highly placed and powerful, who have the interests of Protestantism deeply at heart. They know that there is ever a danger of Papacy while men like Sir Edward de Fresney have wealth and influence. Even if it be not true that he is a disguised Jesuit, yet it may be, yes it is, to the advantage of England and of the Church that evidence should be given against him. Then would his wealth be diminished and

his influence destroyed. We know that you are a good Protestant, Felix Brandon, and——'

" 'I am a good Protestant,' said Brandon. 'No man can say otherwise of me.'

" 'Yet,' said Lake, 'it might be well for you to prove it.'

" 'Doubtless,' said Knowles, 'if you search your memory you will be able to recollect some incidents which for a moment you have forgotten. A visit from a disguised Romish priest to Bindon Parva? Words spoken by Sir Edward in favour of the Mass, spoken when he thought himself safe? Of his friendship with Lord Eveleigh we have abundant evidence, but there are no doubt others with whom he corresponds. There have been messengers perhaps, coming and going at night, strangers landing here from France. You who know him well, who have lived a year under the shadow of his Manor House, will certainly be able to remember many such things or others like them.'

" Felix Brandon was a fool who had all his life trafficked in windy words and such vague emotions as form the food of oratory; but he was not such a fool as to fail to understand that a net was being cast round Sir Edward, a net in which he would be tangled hopelessly until some ruthless hunter came and despatched him. Brandon had heard, while in London, much large talk

about the plot; but he had also heard hints of other things. To these he paid little attention at the time, being fascinated by the verbose rhetoric of those who gabbled about Protestantism. Now he remembered much that had seemed of no importance at the time and he realized that there were men, greedy of power, who made use of the popular outcry over the plot to discredit those who stood in the way of their ambitions, to ruin such men as Lord Eveleigh, who was indeed a Papist, and Sir Edward, who certainly was not.

“ ‘Well,’ said Knowles, ‘can you search your memory and find there what we require?’ ”

“ ‘I find there,’ said Brandon, ‘many things of which I will tell you later. For the present, gentlemen, I go to fetch another bottle of wine for you from the same place from which the last one came. When I return I shall tell you what I remember about Sir Edward.’ ”

“He left the room as he spoke.

“ ‘He has taken the bait,’ said Captain Lake. ‘The fool is hooked and will give the testimony we want.’ ”

“ ‘I am not so sure,’ said Knowles. ‘I do not understand the way he spoke. “Another bottle of wine from the place whence the last came.” What does he mean?’ ”

“ ‘What he says,’ said Lake. ‘I could drink

more of that wine.' He took the empty bottle in his hand and held it upside down so that the last few drops fell into his glass. 'Wherever he gets it, the wine is good. When he comes back——'

" 'But where has he gone?'

" 'He has gone to fetch the wine and search his memory,' said Lake, 'and when he returns we can suggest to him many things which he has forgotten, which it will be well for him to remember.'

" 'I am not sure,' said Knowles. 'I trust that we have not been mistaken in this parson.'

" 'They had been mistaken. Felix Brandon went, as he said he would go, to the place from which the bottle of wine came. He went to the Manor House. There, with scant ceremony, he burst in upon Sir Edward and Lord Eveleigh, who sat together in a small parlour playing chess. He told his news to them; but for some time they found it hard to grasp his meaning. Even then the habit of oratory and the love of fine words ruled Felix Brandon. He made a speech, full of sounding phrases, about treachery and perjury and honour and friendship and perils and escapes from perils. He garnished his discourse with tags from Latin poets, with texts quoted from the Vulgate and a passage from one of Milton's writings, about the greatness of truth, which arises 'shaking invincible locks.'

He worked himself into so fine a passion that at last he wept and came to an end with tears running down his cheeks while he murmured, '*Sunt Lacrymae rerum.*'

" 'I think,' said Lord Eveleigh, 'that you and I, de Fresney, had better ride into the west country.'

" 'He had a cousin who lived in Cornwall, and Sir Edward had friends there too.

" 'And there stay,' said Sir Edward, 'until this tyranny be overpast. There, Mr. Brandon, I quote Scripture, you see, though it be but the Prayer Book version of the Psalms. And so I prove that I am a true Protestant. Mr. Eve, here, would be hard set to cap my text from Holy Writ.'

" 'Papist as I am,' said Lord Eveleigh, 'I can do that.' He laid his hand on Brandon's shoulder. " 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?'" he said. " 'He that hath not slandered his neighbour.'" Eh, Mr. Brandon? I shall remember that text as the one from which you preached a fine sermon to-night, long after I have quite forgotten the other sermon which you gave us this morning.'

" Felix Brandon went back to his Vicarage. He found Knowles and Lake impatient with his long delay, but their scowling faces did not prevent him speaking his mind to them.

“ ‘ You have asked me to remember what I can about Sir Edward de Fresney. I remember many things. I remember that he is a gentleman, honourable and free from all stain of guileful malice. I remember——’ The spirit of the orator possessed poor Brandon again. He spoke as if he were in a pulpit. ‘ I remember that he is loyal to Church and King. I remember that never by word or deed has he been false to his faith. I remember that he is fearless and strong. *Justum et tenacem propositi virum*——’ Out came his Latin tag again, and others might have followed it, with many fine English words and great swelling phrases in between. But Knowles had had enough. He clapped his hat on his head and called to his companion to follow him. They swaggered out of the house, cursing as they went, while Felix Brandon pursued them with a flow of magniloquence. On the doorstep he paused, and as they crossed the road, shouted his last words after them.

“ ‘ This witness will I give willingly. To this will I swear, and as the Almighty sees me’—he raised his hands to heaven with a gesture of appeal—‘ as the Almighty sees me, in so speaking I shall declare the naked truth.’ ”

## VI

JEREMY BAYLE

IN Maturin's vicarage there is a long low room which looks out south over the sea. It has two sunny windows and a large fireplace opposite them. It is by far the pleasantest room in the house and Maturin uses it more than any other. It is in it that he has his books and his writing table. There he and I used to sit in the evenings, and I have often been tempted to linger there in the mornings too.

One morning I yielded to temptation. The room was sunny and warm. I knew that the church would be both gloomy and chilly. I was interested in an old novel which I found on one of Maturin's upper shelves and which I had taken to bed with me the night before. I felt that I owed myself a holiday, and I made up my mind to let the next deadly sin wait a day before I exposed its hideousness to the light. I pulled a comfortable wicker chair over to one of the windows and settled myself for a morning's quiet idleness.

Maturin was out, visiting his school, so I had the place to myself. I read for awhile and then let the book lie on my knee without looking at it.

There is a story about a farmer, Irish I think, who was asked how he spent the long winter evenings when work out of doors had ceased. He confessed that he never read either a book or a newspaper. "But," said he, "sometimes I sits and thinks and more times I simply sits." After I stopped reading that morning, I simply sat. At least I have no recollection of any thoughts at all on any subject. It was while I was thus unoccupied that Maturin came quietly into the room and sat down beside me.

For awhile he said nothing, and I did not feel that I need speak to him. He is one of the few men who do not regard it as necessary to talk when they are in company. I found it a little difficult at first to get into his way of speaking only when I wanted to say something. But after I had lived with him for a week I realized that his freedom from the fetish of compulsory conversation was an immense advantage.

At last he began to talk, in the low monotonous tones in which he always tells his stories. I knew, as soon as he began, that I was going to hear about one of the bygone vicars of Bindon Parva.

"The room," he said, "was very pleasant when Jeremy Bayle sat in it one morning in early spring."

"This room?" I asked.

“Yes,” said Maturin. “It has been changed, of course. There were rough oak beams instead of a ceiling. The windows were smaller, and the glass in the diamond-shaped panes was thick and green, not clearly transparent as it is now. But the sunshine came in, just as it does to-day, and shone on the polished furniture. There was a long oak table at which Bayle sat in his arm chair, a tall dresser of dark oak, with cups and plates on it of varied colours. The sunlight flickered on the shining surfaces of the cups and plates.

“It was early spring and the wind was in the east, so a fire was needed. It burnt pleasantly on the flat hearth, and the light of its flames shone on the polished brass ends of the fire dogs, and on a brass kettle which stood there, and gleamed on the copper circle of a long-handled warming pan which hung in the chimney nook. Above the fireplace was a shelf of oak, supported by two brackets, and very thick. On it two lines of Bishop Ken’s morning hymn were carved :

“ ‘ Let all thy converse be sincere,  
Thy conscience as the noonday clear.’ ”

“This carving was Jeremy Bayle’s work. He had cut the letters clear and deep, choosing these lines because he was a great lover of Bishop Ken. both of his character and of his work. He

counted it a precious thing in his life that he knew the bishop well and could call him a friend. It was out of love of the bishop quite as much as through admiration for the hymn that he carved the two lines on the chimneypiece.

“Before the fire was a wooden cradle in which a baby slept quietly. Close to the window at which we are sitting now, a little girl of three years old or thereabouts was playing with a toy. These were Jeremy Bayle’s children. Their mother was in the kitchen, washing clothes, and the sound of the splashing water came through the open door.”

“How on earth do you know all that, Maturin?” I asked. “If this Jeremy Bayle was a friend of Bishop Ken’s he must have lived—let me see, I forget the date, but centuries ago. How do you know Mrs. Bayle was washing clothes? How do you know there was an oak dresser and a copper warming pan and a baby in an oak cradle?”

It is no use asking Maturin these questions. He only assures me that he knows the men he is talking about and then looks puzzled and pained when I do not believe him. Yet his assumption of intimacy with people he cannot possibly know takes me unawares again and again, and questions jump out of my mouth before I have time to shut my lips on them. This time he gave me

an answer which differed a little from those I had heard before.

"I see these things," he said, "just see them as you see——"

He looked round.

"As I see your books and writing table," I said. "But you cannot possibly do that. I see what is there. You can't see what isn't there, and this man Bayle isn't. If he were I should see him too. But never mind. Go on about him, and tell me what he did when the baby awoke and began to cry."

"The baby did not wake," said Maturin, "nor did the little girl disturb her father. She played quietly while he wrote on the paper before him."

"A sermon?" I asked.

"No," said Maturin, "a hymn. At least he was trying to write a hymn. I have told you that he loved and admired Bishop Ken. It was in imitation of him that he tried to write a hymn. Two verses were already written and he began the third.

"To Thine altar children bring  
Opening buds or flowers of spring,  
Tender hearts and simple praise,  
Innocence of early days.

To Thine altar man and maid,  
Joyful visaged, well arrayed,  
Carry roses, summer's flowers,  
All life's sweetness, all life's powers.

To Thine altar afterwards,  
Laden with their toll's rewards,  
Come . . . . .

“There the writer paused with his pen poised above the paper. He knew what he wanted to express, the thought that our maturity, like our childhood and our youth, belongs to God. He also knew what he wanted to say in the last verse, the fourth, which was not yet begun. He meant to tell of declining powers, the brief wintry daylight of old age, also given, like all the rest, to God.

“But the words and rhymes would not come to him. Though he tried to fix his attention he could not do so. After a little he got up, put his unfinished hymn away with a sigh and drew from his pocket a paper closely written over. This was a letter which had come to him from his beloved Bishop Ken, and it was the thought of what was in the letter which distracted his attention from his rhymes.

“He read the letter all through slowly, though he had read it many times during the two days since it had reached him. Jeremy Bayle’s face was commonly gentle and peaceful and his eyes were full of quiet benignity, but as he read the letter a puckered frown gathered on his forehead and a look of trouble came over his face, as when on an April day a cloud is blown across the sun and the brightness of the fields is dulled.

“The letter was concerned with a question which was troubling the minds of many men at

that time. Could the priests of the Church of England swear allegiance to the new king without being false to the oath of fidelity they had taken to the old king who by right of birth, that is to say by Divine Right, was the monarch of this realm. About this Bishop Ken had much to say, arguing the matter out fairly and fully. He did not press his own opinion as necessarily binding on Jeremy Bayle, but he said plainly what he himself felt compelled to do. Rather than be false to his conscience he would give up all position and office in the Church of England; and that, as we know, was what he did in the end."

"Ah," I said, "I remember. He was a non-Juror. Isn't that what those men were called? There were a good many of them, weren't there?"

"Not very many," said Maturin. "But they were the best of the English clergy at that time."

"They seem to me to have been over-scrupulous fools," I said, "but of course it's extremely difficult for anybody nowadays to understand the minds of people who actually believed in the divine right of one particular man to govern a nation."

"Perhaps," said Maturin, "their belief was no more unreasonable than ours. Why should

the larger part of a crowd have a right to govern? We don't call it a divine right, but we treat it as if it were."

I never heard Maturin say anything like that before, and I was so much surprised that I had no answer to give him at the moment; though he was plainly and ridiculously wrong. What he chooses to call the larger half of a crowd—what the rest of us call the majority—must govern, of course. It would be quite wrong and unjust if it did not; because—well, because it is a majority. Even a dreamer like Maturin must see that. However, I did not say so.

"So Jeremy Bayle," I said, "felt in his bones that he ought to be a Non-Juror, but didn't quite like the notion of giving up his income and his nice vicarage. I don't blame him in the least and I don't wonder that he scowled at Bishop Ken's letter."

"He frowned over it and looked perplexed," said Maturin, "but not because he had any doubt about what he ought to do or what he was going to do. For Jeremy Bayle it would have been impossible to hold his office at the cost of being false to his conscience. What troubled him was something quite different. I told you how he had two lines from Bishop Ken's morning hymn carved across the front of his chimney-piece :

“ ‘Let all thy converse be sincere,  
Thy conscience as the noonday clear.’ ”

His conscience was not clear, because he knew that his converse had not been altogether sincere. He had said nothing to his wife about resigning the living and giving up the vicarage in which they lived together. Though his mind was made up he had not told her. He had talked to her often during the two days since Bishop Ken's letter arrived and had never once hinted at the disaster which threatened their lives. Thus there was a want of sincerity in his converse with her because his silence allowed her to think that all was well.

“ Janet Bayle finished her washing, hung the clothes out to dry and then came into the room where her husband sat. She was a comely young woman of about thirty years of age, with fair hair and large blue eyes. She had a firm mouth and strong competent hands. She stood for a moment in the doorway in her short working skirt with her sleeves rolled up to her elbows. It was easy to guess that it was she and not the mild Jeremy who ruled the house. He looked up, when he heard her enter the room, with a troubled smile on his face. She came over to where he sat and kissed him on the mouth. Then she peeped at the baby in the cradle. It slept soundly. She sat down on the floor beside

the child which played and began to sing softly. It was Bishop Ken's morning hymn which she sang, not because she was a specially pious woman, but because it had a pleasant tune which was familiar to her.

"Janet Bayle and her husband were poor, with no prospect of ever being rich. But they had two things which are better than riches, love and contentment. Because she had her children and her husband, her house and all she really needed, Janet was a happy woman. She was happier than she knew, having been granted the blessing which Solomon craved, in that she was equally removed from the burden of wealth and the hazards of poverty.

"Jeremy Bayle held Bishop Ken's letter in his hand. He folded and re-folded it with fingers that trembled. He had Bishop Ken's decision in his heart and therefore his face was clouded and his eyes full of trouble. 'Let all your converse be sincere,' sang Janet cheerfully, and Jeremy, with the words in his ears, spoke at last.

"He began by setting out his high fantastic theory of loyalty and right. Janet had heard it all many times before, and such theories affected her little. It was well enough for her husband, dreamer, priest and poet—so she thought him—to give his mind to these doctrines. She, for her part, had to plan and sew and cook and wash

and care for a man who was very helpless in all practical matters and for two children who were scarcely more helpless than he. While he spoke she ceased singing and listened. But she neither understood nor heeded.

“From his disquisition on loyalty, Jeremy passed on to speak of the changes which had lately come into England. Janet still smiled and still seemed to listen though her mind was occupied with quite other things. At last Jeremy came to the duty of the clergy of the Church of England and said plainly that he himself must give up his parish.

“Then Janet awoke to the fact that this dreamy husband of hers was talking about practical matters, that he was actually proposing to do something so incredibly foolish as to seem impossible. Just at first she was not greatly troubled. Jeremy had often before wanted to do very foolish things, but she had always been able to overbear him with her sound common sense. She thought that she could do the same thing again.

“‘But,’ she said, ‘we should have nothing to live on if you did that.’

“It seemed to her as if that must settle the matter. It was just the sort of consideration which Jeremy would forget or neglect; but once the thing was pointed out to him he must see

that, whoever sat on the throne, he must continue to be Vicar of Bindon Parva. Otherwise, where would food and clothes come from, for the children, for Jeremy himself and for her?

“But this time her husband, usually docile to her leading, held to his own way. In reply to what she said he quoted the words of Our Lord about the ravens which God feeds and the flowers of the field which He clothes. Now, Janet was a woman of simple piety who regarded the words of Scripture with respect; but——”

Maturin paused, and I felt that I ought to finish his sentence for him.

“But,” I said, “she didn’t quite believe that clothes would grow on her children’s backs as leaves do on lilies, or that Jeremy could go fluttering about picking up worms in his mouth as if he were a blackbird.”

Maturin winced at my way of putting it, but he could not deny that I had got the point of Janet’s difficulty.

“She didn’t say that,” he said.

“Not in those words,” I replied, “but she must have told him that he was talking nonsense. She probably said that those things were all very well in sermons and hymns but they had no connection with real life.”

“While she was talking——” said Maturin.

“Telling Jeremy not to be a fool,” I said.

“ While she was talking the baby woke and cried. Janet took him from his cradle and rocked him in her arms, crooning to him. Jeremy watched her, greatly troubled, much tempted to put the subject by and return to it at some more convenient time, if indeed there were a convenient time for such a subject. She began to sing, to the crying babe, Bishop Ken’s hymn again, and by chance the fatal words of it :

“ ‘ Let all thy converse be sincere.’ ”

He dared not let her think that she had persuaded him.

“ Janet sat down to give her babe the food he cried for. Jeremy watched her with anguish, but he did not shrink from the thing he knew he ought to do. Speaking very slowly and repeating much that he said over and over again, he at last forced her to believe that he meant to do the thing which seemed to her impossible. Why he meant to do it, what the force was which drove him she did not understand either then or ever afterwards.

“ Those clergymen who felt that they could not accept a new allegiance were given a year in which to think about their position, and, it was hoped, change their minds. At the end of the year there would be nothing for them but to resign their livings. The delay was meant to be

merciful, no doubt; but it was no kindness to Jeremy Bayle. It would have been far easier for him if he could have got the evil business over at once on the very day on which he told his wife what his decision was. The year of grace was to him a year of weary wrangling. Day after day Janet argued with him. Sometimes she cried. Sometimes she spent hours in sullen silence. Often she appealed to her children, who could not possibly understand, telling them that their father was callous and cruel and was condemning them to starve. Jeremy listened to all she said to him and to the children with acute pain, which repetition made no easier to bear. He tried many times and very patiently to explain to her how he felt and why he must act as he did. She could not, or would not understand. At last he gave up reasoning with her; but all through that year of trial he never spoke a harsh word to her. Indeed his love for her grew greater because he felt that he was doing her a wrong. He would have been very tender and pitiful if she would have allowed him to approach her. But she held him at a distance and answered his assurances of love by saying that if he cared for her or the children he would not condemn them to starve.

“There was no possible answer to this, and towards the end of the year, when her reproaches

became almost intolerable, Jeremy used to take refuge from her in the church. She never followed him there. Indeed, she came to hate the church, the very fabric of it, with a bitter intensity. She had a confused feeling that the building was in some way responsible for her husband's madness. If there had been no church, or if the walls and arches and windows of it had been other than they were, Jeremy Bayle might have had common sense like other men.

"In this," said Maturin, "she may have been right. The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, and yet——"

"I'm quite prepared to believe that she was right," I said. "If I spent hours in that church of yours, staring at those mural paintings—I suppose they were on view then—and letting all sorts of emotions soak into me I should get queer in the head very soon."

Maturin, in my opinion, is himself unmistakably queer in the head. I daresay he always was more or less, but that church of his has certainly made him worse.

"Janet," he went on, "saw in the end that nothing she said to her husband had any effect on him. Because she was a woman of brave heart and strong sense she turned to making plans for the future. There was a small cottage,

a mere cabin with two tiny rooms in it which was vacant, chiefly because it was in very bad repair. This she secured, and persuaded Sir Giles' steward to mend the roof. She told her husband that since he would not be vicar with an assured income he must turn schoolmaster and earn what he could by teaching children. He gladly promised to undertake this work and became more cheerful than he had been for a long time. He was willing to do anything, anything except be false to his conscience, in order to keep his wife and children from hunger.

“Janet herself could scarcely read and could write no more than her own name; but she became an apostle of education in Bindon Parva. She went round the houses of the farmers and persuaded them to have their children taught. She talked to the fishermen's wives and insisted that they should send their boys and girls to school. She fixed a scale of fees. It was very low because she knew that the people would not pay much for what they did not really want; but she calculated that the money would be sufficient to live on if most of the children came to school and most of their parents paid.

“Because the people were sorry for her and had some affection for her husband they did for a while send their children to school and even paid the fees. But no man was ever less fitted to

deal with boys and girls than Jeremy Bayle was. He began his work with a certain enthusiasm. Being a scholar himself and a lover of literature he hoped to fill the minds of his pupils with the great thoughts he loved and teach them to value the beauty of the language in which they were expressed. He never imagined that his real business was to drive the use of the alphabet into dull, unwilling brains, and that the only way of doing it was by beatings with sticks and straps.

“Within a week the children found out his weakness. If Janet had not come into the school-room often during the day and enforced discipline there would have been a ceaseless uproar. She had strong arms and was not afraid to cuff the biggest boys. For awhile she kept the school together, but she could not teach what she did not know. Her husband failed, perhaps because he knew too much.

“At the end of three months Jeremy had only two pupils left, a crippled boy, the son of a farmer, too lame to be of any use in the fields, and a delicate little girl, the daughter of one of the fishermen. These two came day after day, and Jeremy found a delight in educating them. He used to spend an hour or two at the drudgery of writing, spelling and counting. But when that was over he told them stories and read

poems to them. The children loved listening to him and while he was with them Jeremy was happy.

“But the school fees of these two children were not enough to live on and sometimes even these were not paid. The people were kind. Often a farmer sent down eggs, or butter, or some meal to Janet, saying, with delicate courtesy that the gifts were payment for the schooling of their children, schooling that the children did not receive. The fishermen brought mackerel and pollack when they had good catches. But Janet knew that she could not go on depending on these chance gifts. She realized that if a secure living was to be won it must be by her own work, not her husband’s.

“She never reproached him with his helplessness; but he knew that she despised him, and he admitted sadly to himself that he deserved to be despised. She became the parish midwife, and, being a woman of ability and energy, acquired such skill in her trade that her reputation spread far beyond Bindon Parva. She was sent for by farmers far inland, and was to be seen riding pillion behind some man who had come miles to fetch her. She was called for both day and night. The wildest weather and the worst roads did not daunt her. Often she was absent from her home for days together.

“The whole work of the house and the care of the children, as well as the teaching of his two pupils, was left to Jeremy. He did it, patiently, uncomplainingly, but very inefficiently.

“For a while, before his wife’s reputation was so great that all her time was occupied, Jeremy used to go up to the church and sit there for an hour or two, reading and thinking. Sometimes he took his two pupils there with him, the crippled boy and the delicate girl. These were his happiest times. When his wife became very busy he could not go up to the church for he had no time to spare from household duties.

“One summer evening,” said Maturin, “Jeremy Bayle was sitting in his shirt sleeves at the door of his cottage. His wife was absent. She had ridden away late the night before and he expected she would soon be home. The two children were washed and put into bed. He had swept the floor of the living room clean and set his wife’s supper ready for her, a loaf of brown bread, a hunk of cheese and a jug of beer. Jeremy was sewing a patch on the dress of the elder of his two children. He sewed slowly and badly. Although he tried hard he could not learn to use a needle skilfully. His thread was for ever knotting and tangling. The stitches he made were large and irregular, and his mind was not in his work. On another stool beside him

were paper, a pen and a little pot of ink. As he sewed Jeremy murmured words to himself, half aloud. Now and then he laid down the child's frock, took up the pen and paper and wrote a little.

“Along the village street a gentleman, soberly clad and grave looking, came riding slowly. He stopped and asked a question of a fisherman who met him. Then he rode on and dismounted at the gate of Bayle's cottage. Jeremy Bayle looked up, and suddenly his face was full of joy. He laid down his sewing, ran forward and grasped the hands of his friend, Bishop Ken.

“The bishop threw the reins of his horse over the gatepost. He and Jeremy walked up the path together to the cottage. They entered, and the bishop, pressed by Jeremy, ate some of the bread and cheese which had been laid out for Janet's supper.

“Being on a journey to Dorchester, Bishop Ken had turned aside from his road and ridden into Bindon Parva to see his friend. Since it was already evening he could not stay long; but after he had eaten he sat for a little while on one of the stools outside the cottage door. He looked at Jeremy's sewing with a whimsical smile.

“‘It seems, Jeremy,’ he said, ‘that you were not bred to be a tailor.’

“ ‘Indeed I do the work very ill,’ said Jeremy, ‘as I do all useful things, very ill.’

“ ‘Nevertheless,’ said the bishop, holding the patched frock in his hands, ‘I think that you are sewing firmly and well the Wedding Garment which hereafter you shall wear at the Feast of the Lamb. Many stitches go to the making of it and the work is hard to learn; but I am sure that you are doing it. There is no one,’ the bishop spoke very softly but the words were plainly audible, ‘there is no one who hath given up house or lands or wife or children for His sake; but shall receive—you know the promise, Jeremy.’

“ ‘I know it,’ said Jeremy, ‘and I believe, but——’

“ He was thinking of his vicarage and the field where his cow used to graze, and his wife and children; and how he had received in return for all he sacrificed, poverty and contempt and coldness.

“ ‘There is no but,’ said the bishop. ‘The promise is true.’

“ ‘Soon afterwards he mounted his horse and rode away.’”

“I am afraid, Maturin,” I said, “that my sympathies are all with Janet. I quite see that Jeremy was an uncommonly pious man, but I don’t think he ought to have left her to do all

the earning. Hang it all, a fellow may not be able to teach a school, but if he puts his back into it he can dig. Why didn't he? Besides, to get back to the source of the trouble, ought a man to sacrifice his wife and children to the scruples of his own conscience? I quite agree that any fellow is free to starve himself if he can't get food in what he regards as a legitimate way, but he has no right to starve several other people who are depending upon him."

"But they didn't starve," said Maturin. "'I was young and now I am old, yet saw I never the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging their bread.'"

"That's all very fine," I said, "but only for Janet they would have starved. It was she who kept the pot boiling. I don't think that the 'righteous' have any business to rely on anybody else to do that for them."

## VII

ELIAS WILLIAMS

I HAVE tried to set Maturin's stories in chronological order, and so far my task has been easy enough. His Elizabethan priest was plainly of later date than Hugh Freyne. The Cavalier and the Non-Juror followed him. But the next four stories belong to the eighteenth century and I am not sure about the order in which they ought to come. Maturin himself is no help. He is entirely uninterested in chronology, and the only guide I have had—outside of my very limited knowledge of English Church history, is the list of vicars which hangs in Bindon Parva church porch. Unfortunately, that list was drawn up by Maturin and though I daresay he has the names right, I should not care to trust his dates. Indeed in many cases he has left out the dates altogether and the names appear with question marks after them.

Maturin's is not a tidy mind. He takes no pleasure in getting things and people arranged neatly in rows, each in its proper place. With his peculiar sources of knowledge he could com-

pile a "Who's Who?" of the vicars of Bindon Parva if he chose. But he does not want to. He is quite content to know—or to guess and think he knows—how his predecessors acted and felt.

It was while we were out for a walk one evening that he told me the story of Elias Williams and Paul de Fresney. This was, I think, the third story he told me. It certainly came next in the order of telling to the history of Glendinning the Cavalier. I am sure of that because we set out on our walk with the intention of going over the hill down which Glendinning and afterwards Cromwell's troopers, rode into Bindon Parva.

There is now a well engineered road which makes the climbing of the hill fairly easy, but in Glendinning's time and afterwards, well on into the eighteenth century, the descent of the hill must have been awkward for horsemen. About half way up Maturin stopped.

"This," he said, "is where Elias Williams fell from his horse."

My mind was still full of the Glendinning story.

"I suppose," I said, "that he was one of the Puritans. With a name like Elias he can hardly have been a Cavalier."

"Elias Williams," said Maturin, "was a Methodist preacher, and it was just here that he

fell from his horse. He was a bad rider and careless besides. Also his horse was a poor beast, lean, very old, with scars on his knees which showed that he had fallen before, fallen often."

"A rider like that," I said, "mounted on such a horse, was very likely to come to grief on this hill."

"He sat loose in his saddle," said Maturin. "His knees had no grip, nor his feet any hold on the stirrups. His shoulders and back were bunched up. The reins hung loose on the horse's neck, so that the poor beast was left to pick his own way without help or guidance. Elias Williams held a book in his hands, a great folio Bible."

I have read somewhere that John Wesley himself used to read books on horseback as he rode about the country. It may have been a point of honour with his followers to imitate him.

"He was reading," said Maturin, "the story of the Young Prophet who came down to Bethel to rebuke the idolatry into which they had fallen. That prophet was killed by a lion on his way home."

I remembered the story. It has always seemed to me that the Young Prophet was rather badly treated. Of course he ought not to have stayed to dine when he was distinctly told neither to

eat nor drink in the place, but anyone might have been deceived by the story of the angel speaking which the Old Prophet invented.

“It was while he was reading the story,” Maturin went on, “that the horse stumbled. In recovering it put its hoof on a loose rolling stone and fell. Elias Williams was pitched off. He fell on his shoulder. His Bible flew out of his hand and lay on the grass beside the road.

“It appeared that both horse and man were used to such disasters. The horse struggled up and stood with hanging head and heaving flanks. The young man picked himself up and brushed the dust off his clothes as well as he could. Then he went in search of his Bible and found it was none the worse for its fall. Perhaps the book, like the horse and the man, was used to it. He was a young man of self-restraint. He did not swear or show any sign of anger. After he had picked up the Bible he climbed stiffly into his saddle and rode on again.

“It was about six o’clock on a fine summer evening when he reached Bindon Parva. Some of the fishermen were standing in a group near their boats. Others were sitting on the bench outside the ale house with mugs in their hands. The women were at their cottage-doors gossiping. A number of children were playing a noisy game on the grass above the cove where nets

were stretched to dry. No one had any work to do, so every one stared at the young man when he rode into the village.

“He was worth staring at, for he behaved in a very odd way. He dismounted and left his horse. The beast might have wandered away if he had chosen, but seemed too tired and spiritless to stir. The young man laid his Bible carefully on the stone wall outside Jim Bunce’s cottage. Then he knelt down in the middle of the road, shut his eyes and prayed. He prayed aloud, though no one was near enough to hear what he said.

“‘One of them Methodies,’ said Jim Bunce, who was drinking beer.

“Then he spat to show his contempt for ‘Methodies.’ The man beside him spat too and said that such people were not wanted in Bindon Parva. If he meant that the presence of a Methodist preacher was not desired he was right enough. If he meant that the religion the Methodists preached was not needed he was very gravely wrong. There was little or no religion in Bindon Parva at that time.

“The young man rose from his knees and began to sing a hymn in a weak tenor voice. The children stopped their game and gathered round him, open-mouthed and curious. A number of women left their doors and went to where he

stood. Some of the fishermen sidled up to the outskirts of the gathering group. Vague rumours of the doings of the 'Methodies' had come from Wareham and Corfe Castle, but none of their preachers had ever before visited Bindon Parva.

"He sang his hymn all by himself, for no one in Bindon Parva knew either the words or the tune. The performance was not impressive. Then he began to preach. He spoke about heaven and hell, salvation and damnation, sin and righteousness, with a crude violence. He shouted frequent texts of Scripture to prove or illustrate the things he said. His voice as he went on gathered strength. His face flushed. His eyes had an eager light in them. There was no doubt about his being in earnest. He was more. He was possessed by the doctrines he preached. He believed that he was wrestling with the devil for the souls of the men and women before him, that on their reception of his message depended their destiny throughout eternity, whether they would be happy for ever in heaven or tortured for ever in hell. That was a tremendous business, an awful thing. It was small wonder that a man utterly convinced of the truth of what he said should be possessed, inspired, lifted up in spirit so that he went beyond himself. And this young man did. He had an earnestness, a power, a virtue in his

preaching which could only have come to him from outside. On his horse on the way down the hill, he was a feeble creature whom no one would have regarded. When he preached he was an apostle whom men might follow and love, or hate and persecute, whom they could not ignore, whether for good or ill.

“His preaching produced both effects on his audience. Some women and one or two men were interested and even moved. In others a feeling of hostility was aroused. Jim Bunce laid down his mug of beer and joined the outer fringe of the circle of listeners. He growled out curses, not very loud, not so that they could be heard by the young preacher, but loud enough to attract the attention of those near him. A few boys, mischievous lads of sixteen or seventeen, gathered round Bunce, hoping for some rough sport. One of them threw a handful of mussel shells at the preacher. Jim Bunce grinned approval. Other missiles were flung. Bits of decayed fish, kept for baiting lobster pots, empty crab shells, the débris of the beach of a fishing village. There was nothing dangerous, nothing to hurt the young preacher. It was all rough play and no worse. But there were shouts and scoffs, as well as missiles, and it became more and more difficult to go on preaching. Yet the young man went on, unmoved by the jeers or the

things which struck him. The only difference which the opposition made in his sermon was that he spoke less about the torments of hell and more about the love of God.

“Then the vicar was seen coming down from the church. It was felt by every one that he would disapprove of the preacher and that his favour might be won by increasing the attacks on the stranger.”

“A very reasonable expectation,” I said. “No vicar can be expected to like Dissenters, any more than a doctor likes quacks. If that vicar was the least like some of the clergy I have met he would be quite pleased at the boys who threw rotten fish at Elias Williams. The people must have understood that well enough.”

Maturin sighed.

“Yes,” he said, “men have often sought to serve the church, or at least to win the favour of the church’s priests by attacking the messenger of the Church’s Founder, and it was so here. A cry was raised by Jim Bunce and taken up by the greater part of the crowd that the ‘Methody’ should be stoned out of the village. The clamour and the noise increased. Stones and lumps of wood, things that might do real injury were hurled. The young preacher was struck in the mouth and had to wipe away the

blood before he could go on preaching. At last he was struck on the head by a stone, so severely that he staggered back and it was a minute before he recovered himself.

“It was then that the vicar, having walked down from the church gate with leisurely dignity, reached the crowd.

“The vicar in those days was Paul de Fresney, younger brother of Sir Giles the squire. He was a scholar and a gentleman. He had accepted the living of Bindon Parva because he loved the place and because he desired a life of peace and quiet. He spent much time over his books, being engaged in writing a history of the later Byzantine Emperors. He corresponded with learned men and scholars at Oxford and abroad. Except that he read the service in church on Sundays he did nothing for religion in Bindon Parva. As a magistrate, acting along with his brother, Sir Giles, he regulated the temporal affairs of the parish. His life was without scandal chiefly because he had no taste for roystering and drunkenness, preferring his books to either women or wine. He was kindly and ready to help any one in need, if he heard about the need. But this was no great virtue in him for he had an ample private fortune and was not dependent on the small stipend of his vicarage.

“Jim Bunce and the others who thought that they would please the vicar by harrying the Methodist preacher found that they were mistaken. Paul de Fresney bid them cease in a tone which showed he meant to be obeyed. Those who had been loudest and fiercest in the attack shrank away. They had no wish to set themselves in opposition to Paul de Fresney, for they knew his power in the parish and were well aware that, being a gentleman, he would not be in the least afraid to use it, whatever outcry they might raise.

“The young preacher wiped the blood from his mouth again and held his hand to the place on his head where the last stone had struck him. Paul de Fresney went to him.

“‘You had better come up to my house,’ he said courteously. ‘There you can wash your face and bind up the wound on your head. Also I think you would be the better of a glass of wine.’

“The preacher looked at him, and, though he had never seen him before, knew that he must be the vicar of the parish. Now Paul de Fresney’s reputation was known among the zealous Methodists of Wareham, from which town the young man came. They thought and spoke in their scriptural phrases about the vicar of Bindon Parva as one of the worst of those idle

shepherds who do not feed the flock. It was because this particular flock needed spiritual food badly that Elias Williams, the young preacher, had been sent to the village.

“‘I may not go with you,’ said the preacher, ‘for it was said to me by the word of the Lord : ‘Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there.’”

“He quoted from the chapter in the Book of Kings which he had been reading while he rode down the hill. Paul de Fresney remembered the story in which the words occurred, although he was no great reader of the Bible. He smiled slightly.

“‘Surely,’ he said, ‘the Lord did not forbid you to wash your face.’

“Now the Lord had said several things to Elias Williams—or so he believed—about his mission to Bindon Parva. But he had not spoken about washing, either for or against it.

“‘I think,’ said Paul de Fresney, ‘that you will find a basin of water a comfortable thing. And as for the glass of wine—well, I do not press that if you are sure that the Lord has forbidden it.’

“Elias Williams looked at him puzzled and doubtful. This was not the sort of treatment that he had expected from the vicar of Bindon Parva. Courtesy and kindness were the last

things he had looked for, and he did not know how to receive them when they were offered to him. But it was not in him to be churlish. Because he was Christ's servant his heart responded readily to friendliness.

"Paul de Fresney saw the hesitation. He linked his arm in that of the young man and led him up to the vicarage. There Elias Williams washed the blood from his face, and old Madge Whittle, the vicar's housekeeper, bound up his head for him. She was a woman who had some skill with wounds, and she kept a store of ointments which she used on children and on men who met with accidents.

"Afterwards Paul de Fresney led the young man into his parlour, where a table was spread with cold meat and a bottle of wine. Elias Williams drew back.

"‘The word of the Lord came unto me,’ he said, ‘saying: “Thou shalt eat no bread——”’

"‘If so,’ said the vicar. ‘If you are quite sure of that——’

"Elias Williams was quite sure.

"‘Yet,’ said the vicar, ‘you may sit down and rest awhile. I have given orders that your horse should be led into my stable and there given a feed. He is no doubt eating his oats now, unless the Lord has given orders to him too.’

“A cleverer and less simple-minded man might have suspected that he was being laughed at, but to Elias Williams there was nothing very strange in the thought that God might speak to a horse just as he had once spoken to an ass. He was, besides, fond of the poor beast on which he rode, and felt glad that it should have a good feast of oats.

“Paul de Fresney saw the simpleness, kindness and gentleness of the young man. He felt sincerely sorry for him. Partly because he had undertaken such a hopeless task as the preaching of Christianity to the people of Bindon Parva and partly because he plainly stood in need of food and drink.

“‘I feel,’ he said, after they had sat silent for a few minutes, ‘that I ought to give you something to eat and drink. I also, in my poor way, am a minister of the Lord whom you serve, and I remember His words about feeding the hungry and receiving strangers. Surely you will not deny me the privilege of obeying Him?’

“‘It was said unto me by the word of the Lord,’ said Elias Williams, ‘“thou shalt eat no bread nor——”’

“‘But,’ said Paul de Fresney, ‘it was also said unto me by the word of the Lord——Wait one moment and I shall get the exact words.’

“He rose from his chair and took a Bible from

the bookcase. He opened it at the chapter of the Book of Kings from which Williams had been quoting, and read aloud :

“ ‘I am a prophet also as thou art, and an angel spake unto me by the word of the Lord saying : ‘Bring him back into thine house that he may eat bread and drink water.’ ”

“ Then he closed the book and put it back on the shelf. He had caught sight of what followed and he did not wish to read it aloud. For the next words, part of the very verse he read, were these : ‘But he lied unto him.’ ”

“ That was what he was doing, for no angel of the Lord had spoken to him and, being the kind of man he was, the thought of a direct message from God made him smile. It was only because he had a kindly heart that he wished to feed this young man. He took the easiest way of persuading him to eat, as a mother does with a sick child, not counting it wrong to depart a little from the truth.

“ So Elias Williams ate and drank. Being a young man and very hungry he ate and drank heartily of the food and pleasant wine set before him. Perhaps never before in his life had he enjoyed so good a meal.

“ ‘Next time you come here to preach,’ said the vicar, ‘I shall see to it that you have a more

orderly congregation, and I myself hope to profit by listening to you.'

"Elias Williams rode back to Wareham that evening very much at ease in body but perplexed in mind.

"Paul de Fresney supped at the Manor House and told his brother the story of the visit of the Methodist preacher.

" 'We don't want those fellows here,' said Sir Giles. 'They upset men's minds and cause unrest among the people. You should have let the boys stone him out of the village, Paul, or given the word to duck him in the sea.'

" 'I think perhaps,' said Paul softly, 'that I chose a better way.'

"And no doubt," said Maturin, "he was right. The way of kindness, which is Christ's way, is always the best in dealing even with evil. And Paul de Fresney may have thought there was more evil than good about the Methodists."

But I understood the vicar's words differently. He seemed to me to mean that he was taking the sting out of Elias Williams' preaching by the crafty plan of treating the preacher so kindly that he could no longer, with any show of decency, point out the shortcomings of the church's doctrine and practice. There are, so says the proverb, more ways of killing a cat than choking it with cream; but if I were a

mouse I should not trouble myself about killing the cat at all provided it were in my power to give the creature cream enough to make it sleepy and lazy. That, I thought, was probably Paul de Fresney's policy, a much more dangerous one to Elias Williams than Sir Giles' stoning and ducking.

"Three days later," Maturin went on, "Elias Williams came again to Bindon Parva to preach. This time his reception was very different. His horse was taken when he dismounted and led up to the Vicarage stable. A box was brought out of the ale house and set for him to stand on. So he was raised above the people. The whole village assembled to listen to him, for it had been given out that the vicar wished every one to be there, and those who would not have come out of curiosity, came because they were afraid to disobey the summons. Old Matthew, the parish clerk, stood on the outskirts of the crowd with a good stout stick in his hand ready to make it hard for any unruly boys who tried to disturb the preacher. Paul de Fresney sat on a chair arranged for him right opposite the preacher's stand. Never had any evangelist a better opportunity for delivering his message than Elias Williams had that day.

"Yet he failed. He said all that he meant to say, quoted every text of Scripture which he had

planned to quote, spoke of heaven and hell in words of high rhapsody, even working himself up to transient flashes of passion. Yet he failed. And he knew it. His audience listened, just as they listened on Sunday to the vicar, of whose sermons they did not understand one word. There was no movement of men's hearts, no outpouring of the Spirit of God. Perhaps it was the orderliness of the meeting which spoiled the effect of the sermon by chilling the heart of the preacher. Perhaps the Spirit of God does not operate where there is no opposition or sign of persecution. Perhaps it was the presence of Paul de Fresney, listening with cool courtesy and careful attention, which took the heart out of the preacher and dulled the hearers.

“Of all those present Paul de Fresney himself was the only one to be impressed. A great deal of what the preacher said he did not believe. The manner of the speaking offended his taste. He disliked intensely the enthusiasm which set Elias Williams at this work. Enthusiasm of any kind seemed to him evidence of a lack of mental balance. He liked reason and self-restraint. Yet he was impressed. Williams' childlike simplicity, his evident sincerity, his plain desire to do good had their effect on the vicar's mind.

“After the meeting was over Elias Williams

had his supper in the Vicarage. This time he scarcely protested and it was with a smile that Paul de Fresney repeated his text about the angel who spoke to him.

“After awhile, since Wareham was a long way off and Elias Williams wanted to come often sleep at the Vicarage. Sometimes he stayed a to Bindon Parva it was arranged that he should whole week at a time. He knew that his work in Bindon Parva was a failure. He excited no hatred, and—perhaps therefore—he made no converts. But he continued to preach to people who were wholly apathetic. He had lost confidence in himself, but he would not admit that his message could fail. A curious friendship sprang up between him and Paul de Fresney. The scholarly gentleman, hitherto immersed in the often scandalous Greek memoirs of the period he studied, found the young Methodist preacher not only interesting but lovable. Elias Williams discovered that there was something to respect and like in the kindly scholar.

“Sir Giles at the Manor House grumbled that his brother should entertain a man like Elias Williams in the Vicarage.

“‘The idle apprentice of some tailor,’ he said, ‘whom his master ought to whip. A ranter with the manners of his class and no respect for authority.’

“But Paul de Fresney had his answer ready.

“ ‘Did you ever hear it said that if the King was well advised he would make a bishop of John Wesley? That would teach him common sense.’

“ ‘But you can’t make a bishop out of that unlicked pup at the Vicarage,’ said Sir Giles.

“ ‘No,’ said his brother. ‘But I may make him my curate if I can get the bishop to ordain him.’

“What would have happened to John Wesley if the King had made him a bishop we do not know. What happened to Elias Williams I am able to tell. He lived in the Vicarage and was more comfortable than he had ever been in his life. He ate well, slept soft and drank good wine. He enjoyed an income which seemed to him to be riches, and the Spirit which had been in him departed. He ministered in the church and preached there. But there was no more grace or unction in his sermons than in the cool essays on morality which Paul de Fresney read from the pulpit.

“After awhile the long evenings in the Vicarage began to weary the young man. He had no taste for books and no inclination to learn. While Paul de Fresney sat over his Greek authors, marking passages and penning careful notes, Elias Williams slipped down to

the ale house and drank there with the men who frequented the place and often fuddled themselves of an evening. He fell in love after a fashion with one of the village girls, who was pleased enough to have the curate for a sweetheart.

“Paul de Fresney, though he took no great interest in what was going on in the village, could not be ignorant of his curate’s doings. He reasoned with him and warned him. He reasoned along wrong lines and his warnings were of the wrong kind. If he had spoken about the pains of hell, if he had invoked the power of God and appealed to the love of the Redeemer, he might have saved Elias Williams. But he spoke of the need of decency and self-restraint, of the folly of self-indulgence, of the respect which a clergyman owes to his cloth. It would have been possible even then to win the young man for religion. Being what he was it was impossible to persuade him into respectability.

“Then one day Sir Giles came to the Vicarage chuckling as if he had a good joke to tell.

“‘Well, Paul,’ he said. ‘You’ve weaned that curate of yours off Methodism pretty thoroughly. What do you think the young pup has been doing? He’s got that good-looking daughter of Whittle’s into trouble. Her mother was up at the Manor House to complain to me. He’ll

have to marry her, Paul. That's the long and short of it. Marry her and make an honest woman of her.'

"Sir Giles laughed. The 'trouble' of a village girl in Bindon Parva was no great matter. The thing happened constantly. There was little scandal and no fuss made about it. The couple got married, or perhaps did not. Nobody, least of all Sir Giles, cared. But the thing became an excellent joke when the man in the case was the curate. And there was an irresistible zest added by the recollection that he had once been a Methodist preacher.

"'I met him as I came up here,' said Sir Giles, 'and I told him what I thought of him. Oh, I wasn't too hard on him. Damn it all, Paul, a man's a man even if he happens to be a parson, and there aren't many who don't run after a petticoat one time or another. You can't expect a young fellow to bury himself in Greek books the way you do. No, I wasn't hard on him, but I happened to recollect a couple of texts of Scripture that he used to be rather fond of himself, especially one about the people who have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. I don't think he quite liked it.'

"I have said that while he lived in the Vicarage after his ordination the Spirit departed

from Elias Williams. It returned again, like a tongue of fire to scorch him, when Sir Giles, chuckling and laughing, wholly good-humoured, quoted texts of Scripture to him. He had experienced sudden and violent religious emotion before, when first he had been converted to Methodism. He experienced this time a shock so terrible that it left him panting. He saw, as if by a blinding lightning flash, the degradation of his life. He knew that he had been false to all that was best, that he had sunk into unforgiveable sin, that he had lost his soul.

“He went off, walking at frantic speed up the steep hill beside the village. He lay down near the edge of the cliff. Then he moaned and wailed aloud in agony, sometimes clutching and tearing the grass with his hands. He cried out to God, but no voice answered him. He cursed himself with furious bitterness.

“A sea mist gathered off Portland Head, crept eastward along the coast, covering the water with grey patches, spreading till the patches joined together and the whole was grey, climbing from the sea and the beaches till it enveloped the tops of the cliffs, blotting out the sea below, the sun and sky above. In this damp darkness Elias Williams lay for hours. Now and then he cried aloud. Now and then he was shaken with bursts of hysterical sobbing. The evening came and

the night after it settled over a land still wrapped in fog.

“Next morning they found the body of Elias Williams, crushed and broken, lying at the foot of the cliff. They carried it up to the Vicarage.

“A few days later Paul de Fresney buried it. All the village people were present at the funeral and the little church was filled. Old Matthew the clerk stood near the prayer desk ready to read the alternate verses of the psalm and give the signal for the coffin-bearers when the time came for going into the churchyard.

“He was surprised—even a little scandalized—when the vicar for the first time in his life departed from the service set down in the Prayer Book. Instead of reading the chapter which St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the resurrection, he turned over the pages of the Bible till he found the thirteenth chapter of the First Book of Kings.

“Very solemnly and slowly he read aloud to a congregation which did not listen and would not have understood if they had listened, the story of the young prophet who came down to rebuke wickedness in Bethel, whom the old prophet who lived there persuaded to stay and eat, though the Lord had said to him: Thou shalt not. Whom a lion met and slew, whom the old prophet afterwards buried.

“At the end of the reading his voice suddenly broke. Paul de Fresney, gentleman, scholar, sceptic and cynic, was swept by a wave of emotion.

“‘And he laid his carcase in the grave,’ he read, ‘and mourned over him saying: “Alas, my brother.” And he said: “When I am dead lay me in the sepulchre where the man of God is buried. Lay my bones beside his bones.”’

“The apathetic congregation was startled to hear their vicar sob. Afterwards Sir Giles commiserated him on having developed a mixture of a hiccough and a bad cold in the middle of the service. But by that time Paul de Fresney was himself again. He smiled.”

## VIII

MARY FLETCHER.

I FINISHED the Deadly Sins on the south wall of the chancel, successfully scraping the whitewash off the whole seven—nasty beasts all of them. Then I went to work on the north wall. Lionel, who knows the ways of church decorators of all ages, told me that I was likely to find there the seven corresponding or antagonistic Virtues. He was perfectly right. The first thing I uncovered was a picture of a very noble looking knight in armour who carried a sort of banner—in reality a glorified label—with the word *Fortitudo* on it. That told me who he was.

Neither he nor any one of the virtues was as interesting as the vices. The pictures lacked imagination and conviction. The artist seemed to me to have worked at them without delight. Fortitude, for instance, was a perfectly commonplace knight. Any ecclesiastical artist to-day could produce him in stained glass or mosaic, turning him out in dozens without trouble or thought, if there were any considerable demand for Fortitudes.

I fetched Maturin in to look at Fortitude, and when I got him I tried to involve him in a discussion. Were there two artists engaged in decorating Bindon Parva church, one a man of daring fancy who did the Sins, the other a pious student from some municipal art school of that time who took on the Virtues? Or did the same man do both and allow his sense of reverence to paralyze his imagination when he came to the Virtues? I have noticed again and again that religious people, the country clergy, for instance, who are dull enough when talking about the church or their parishes, brighten up in the most surprising manner when they allow themselves to tell a slightly improper story. In fact, they tell improper stories much better than the rest of us, achieving a sly humour which less religious people somehow miss. Thus Sterne, who was a clergyman and therefore very religious, makes more out of a piquant situation than Fielding does. Fielding, of course, was a commonplace sinner. That may have been the way of the Bindon Parva artist. He enjoyed himself over the sins and did very good work on them. The Virtues were thoroughly dull, though I have no doubt that he hated evil and loved good.

I said all that to Maturin, hoping to drag him into an argument. Either he did not understand

what I was talking about, or he was totally uninterested in the subject. He looked at Fortitude for some time with mild disapproval and then said :

“ I have often thought that Fortitude ought to be represented as a woman and not a man.”

That was no kind of answer to what I had been saying, but I had no objection to allowing the conversation to go Maturin's way.

“ We shall find a female figure,” I said, “ when we get to Charity. The artist who painted that sort of Fortitude is sure to have represented Charity as a plumpish, fair-haired young woman with a couple of babies.”

I was perfectly right in that guess, except that the artist gave his Charity four children instead of two. She held one in her arms while the other three tugged at her petticoats. Her face had an expression of sheepish benignity. But Maturin was not satisfied with the prospect of a nice-looking Charity complete with babes. He wanted a female Fortitude too. And when he had finished the story he told me, I saw that no ordinary Joan of Arc, a feminine edition of the knight on the wall, would have suited him. He wanted something that no artist could draw successfully, which was certainly far beyond the powers of the Bindon Parva man.

“ The little church,” said Maturin, “ was

nearly dark. The sun had set and the glow left behind came dimly through the western window. All up the nave of the church and in the choir as far as the altar rails the floor was strewn with flowers. Many of them were trampled and crushed. All of them were fading. They had been fresh and sweet when the children scattered them, but the bride and bridegroom had walked over them when they came down from the altar arm in arm. All those who followed them, the bridesmaids and the groomsmen and gouty old Sir Giles de Fresney leaning on his stick, had also walked on the flowers. Across the chancel arch was stretched a wreath of roses, and they were fading. Behind the altar was a great shield of roses. Red roses were the ground of it, and, marked out in white roses, were the letters H and F. These were the initials of the bridegroom, Hugh, and the bride, Frances.

“It was a great wedding, celebrated as no wedding ever had been before in Bindon Parva. The village people were feasted lavishly, and neighbours from all over the county had been gathered for the festivities in the Manor House. There were signs of rejoicing everywhere. But no one rejoiced so heartily as old Sir Giles, father of Hugh, the bridegroom, uncle and guardian of Frances, the bride. Every one knew, but none knew so well as Sir Giles, that

there was cause for gladness over this marriage more than over most.

Sir Giles, in his youth and long afterwards, was a gambler and a rake. He spent and wasted all that was his, almost all that was scarcely his, the property which he held in trust for the de Fresneys of the future. In the end it came to this : creditors pressed so hard that Bindon Parva and all the lands east and west of it would have passed from the de Fresneys if Hugh had not secured the fortune of his cousin by marrying her. That fortune saved the estate and gave the de Fresneys another hundred years' possession of it.

“ Sir Giles, in his youth and long afterwards, with cards and dice and horses. Edward, his brother, was a gambler too, but he played with ships and merchandise, challenging fortune on eastern seas instead of the tables of London clubs. While Sir Giles was losing a fortune Edward made one. When he died, his daughter, Frances, was a great heiress. Her father's will committed her to the care of Sir Giles to be brought up at Bindon Parva. There she grew from childhood to young womanhood, a pale, slim creature of little attractiveness and no wit to redeem her plain face.

“ It was clear to every one, clear to Sir Giles, but clearest of all to Hugh and the pale-faced

Frances that the marriage was a thing ordained so that the family should be saved and the de Fresneys survive as de Fresneys of Bindon Parva. No one questioned the necessity, and in due time, without unseemly haste and without opposition, the thing was done.

“The village rejoiced. The great families of the county flocked to Bindon Parva to wish well to bride and bridegroom, but chiefly to congratulate old Sir Giles. The church was decked with flowers. Parson Fletcher, in a clean surplice and well ironed bands, read the service in a broad Dorset accent, and afterwards all the company trooped up to the Manor House to eat and drink and sing and dance. Parson Fletcher went to the Manor House, too, to take such part as he might in the eating and drinking. He was a man who loved good food and, being poor, seldom tasted wine.

“In those days the position of the common clergy in England was a very humble one. A bishop or other dignitary might associate with gentry on terms of equality, but a country parson like John Fletcher, although he was an ordained priest, was treated by the squire of the parish as little better than an upper servant. Indeed, John Fletcher was little better, for he lived much as the fishermen and farmers around him did. On Sundays he ate his dinners at Sir

Giles' table, but there his social intercourse ended.

"Therefore, though he went up to the Manor House after the wedding, he hardly regarded himself—certainly no one else regarded him—as one of the guests. He did not stay there long. Having got what he wanted, his fill of good food and more wine than he ought to have drunk, he said goodbye to Sir Giles, wished happiness to the bride, and went away.

"On his way home he went up to the church to lock the door. While he fumbled with the great rusty key, trying to push it into the lock, he heard sounds in the church. He listened and it seemed to him that there was a woman inside crying in loud unrestrained grief. It surprised him very much that anyone should be in the church at such an hour for it was seldom opened or used except on Sundays. That was the way in those days, for religious life in England was at a low ebb."

Here I interrupted Maturin. I detest his habit of talking vaguely about "those days." He may know the people he tells stories about, but I do not, and, having an orderly mind, I like to have some idea of when they lived. In the course of my wanderings about the church I had found a list of the vicars of Bindon Parva from long before the time of Hugh Fresney. It

was framed and hung up in the vestry under the tower. I went down to it and discovered that John Fletcher was vicar from 1746 to 1767. With those dates clear in my mind I went back to Maturin and asked him to go on with his story.

“John Fletcher, with the key in his hand, stood listening. At first he was a little doubtful whether he was sober enough to be sure that he really heard anything. He had plenty of experience of the effects of ale and wine, and he knew that they play queer tricks with those who drink freely. But he was soon convinced that the sounds he heard were real enough. There certainly was a woman in the church and she was crying. Sometimes she cried out ‘Ah, ah,’ as if she was in great pain and the sounds were forced from her. Once, after a burst of sobbing, she cried out articulate words :

“‘He is mine. He is mine. They have taken him from me but he is mine.’

“John Fletcher recognised the voice of his daughter Mary. He knew what her words meant and why she was crying. He was exceedingly angry.

“He went into the church and saw his daughter crouched in the corner near the font in an attitude of reckless, abandoned grief. The wedding which set the villagers rejoicing and the fine company at the Manor House

dancing, had broken Mary Fletcher's heart. The roses of the wreath across the chancel arch, the white rose initials, H and F behind the altar were bitter things for her. The flowers which lay trampled along the aisle were her crushed hopes and dead joys. Hugh de Fresney had been her lover and she had given her love to him, entirely, all her love. It had been hopeless from the first. She had known that just as well as he did. There was a social gulf between them enough in itself to make a marriage impossible. How could a de Fresney marry the child of one of his father's upper servants? And, besides that, there was the desperate plight of the family and the estate, from which there was no escape except by means of Frances' fortune. Hugh must have that and to get it he must marry his cousin. Yet—so little has wisdom or prudence to do with such things—Mary Fletcher loved him and he, in his way, a lesser way, loved her. That was why she cried out, 'He is mine.' By right of the love of both their hearts he was hers, not his bride's.

"John Fletcher was a rough man with small tenderness about him. When he first heard of his daughter's meetings with Hugh de Fresney he scolded the girl, using coarse plainness of speech, accusing her of being what she was not, what a girl like her could never be even though

she loved. Afterwards, when she did not obey him he beat her, as men in those days often beat their maidservants, their daughters and even their wives. When he entered the church that evening he meant to drag her home with him and beat her again.

“Something stopped him. Perhaps his anger was very short-lived, as moods often are with men who have drunk heavily, for they change from surliness to good fellowship without reason. Perhaps some feeling of gentleness or sympathy was stirred in him by the good food he had eaten. Men are seldom very angry when their bellies are comfortably filled. Perhaps—who knows?—a spirit not of himself at all came to him from the church in which he stood and worked in him. Whatever moved him he said no word to the girl, nor touched her, but turned away silently and went home. When he reached the Vicarage he stretched himself in his arm-chair in the kitchen, loosened the buttons of his cassock and sank into a heavy sleep.

“While he was snoring and the wedding guests from the Manor House were dancing, Mary Fletcher crouched alone in the church with her broken heart and sad memories. She ceased to cry aloud or sob. She thought back over days gone for ever.

“She and Hugh sometimes used to sit together

under the white cliffs in the sunshine. In front of them was the dancing sea and the broad white belt of foam where the waves broke and rushed up the shore. Over them white cloudlets moved slowly across the blue sky and white birds went gliding and swooping. They sat there hand in hand, speaking little, but absorbed in love, the mysterious innocent love of boy and girl. It was enough for her to sit there loving him and feeling herself beloved. The memory of such days brought anguish so acute that it dried up the flow of her tears. She could not cry out because the pain crushed her.

“ Sometimes she used to climb the hill beside the village and sit there in the coarse grass near the edge of the cliff. Below her far down, were the sea and the rocks and the beach. Away to the right was Portland, stretching dimly out into the shadow. Nearer at hand stretched the broken line of the coast, white cliffs with jagged edges, deep bays, long curved beaches, foam-washed sentinel rocks, like outposts guarding the land. Then, a tiny figure in the distance, Hugh came climbing up to her. Her heart beat fast with joy and longing as he came nearer. He waved a greeting. He shouted to her. At last he was beside her and she could scarcely breathe because of her intense delight. These brief hours of complete joy were very sweet.

The desolation of the utter end of them was a cold numbness, like a hand of ice crushing her heart.

“ Mary Fletcher was the parson’s daughter. She had learned her catechism, by way of beatings and many tears, when she was a child, very much as she had learned the multiplication table, with about the same effect on her spiritual life. She had sat in church Sunday after Sunday, listening to her father while he gabbled through the prayers and preached one after another, over and over again, his store of arid sermons. Of these she remembered nothing. Of the prayers certain phrases clung to her memory, for no one, however ignorant, can escape the charm of the English Liturgy if he listens to it often. But there her religion stopped. There was no more of it. Of Christ the Consoler she had never heard. Of the grace to be strong and endure which comes through the Sacrament she had never heard. Yet there in the darkness of the church, Christ laid his gentle hands on her and sacramental grace came to her through outward material things, the stones of the fabric of the church. She did not know what was happening to her. She made no conscious effort to reach God. She was like a dumb, unreasoning creature, to which comes unexpected and unsought cessation of pain. Her great sorrow was with

her still and always would be; but the intolerable bitterness of it was gone.

“It was ten o’clock that night when she left the church, turning the key in the lock when she closed the door. The dancing and the merriment at the Manor House were at their height. John Fletcher still slept in his chair, snoring hoarsely. Mary hung the key on its nail beside the clock and crept up to her bedroom.”

Maturin paused there. It was a habit of his to stop abruptly in his stories, leaving me in the position of a man who unwarily starts a serial tale in a magazine and is brought up short by the editorial promise of a further instalment at some future date. My plan was to make comments of a flippant kind on what I heard, hoping in this way to irritate Maturin into starting again.

“Hugh de Fresney seems to have been a contemptible beast,” I said. “I hope he came to a bad end. He certainly deserved to after breaking the heart of the girl he loved and marrying another for the sake of her money.”

“Hugh de Fresney,” said Maturin, “had what is called a successful life; but he was never a happy man. He sat in Parliament for many years as one of the Members for Dorchester. He was wise, and more honest than most men who took part in politics in those days.

He came in the end to be one on whose counsel the king and his ministers greatly relied. For the most part he lived in London, visiting Bindon Parva very seldom and only for a day or two at a time. That was not because he hated the place. He loved it, every sweep of the downs, every curve of the beaches, every rock and cove, as all the de Fresneys loved their home. But Bindon Parva was full of memories for him, memories which he could not endure. To escape them or stifle them he lived in London and gave all his energy to his work. His love for Mary Fletcher was not as complete a thing as hers for him, but it was great enough to make it impossible for him to forget.

“When John Fletcher died and a new parson came to Bindon, Mary went to be waiting maid to Lady de Fresney, Frances the heiress. She lived with her mistress in the Manor House. Sir Hugh would have taken his wife up to London if she had wished to go. But she had little ability for the life of a great political lady and no taste for it. Indeed, she had small ambition of her own and she knew that she would not share her husband’s life whether she was with him or not. She had never, since the very first, had any illusions about her marriage. She knew that her husband did not love her, though she knew nothing about his love for Mary Fletcher.

“She was childless and a few years after her marriage she ceased to be young. Even before Mary Fletcher came to her she was a colourless, middle-aged woman. She lived a dull, spiritless life with little hope or fear or joy or pain in it. She never reproached her husband or claimed any return from him for the freedom, power and security which she had given him with her fortune. She did not even feel any resentment. The marriage had been a duty and she had performed it. That was the way she thought of it.

“By degrees she and Mary became friends. They worked together in the Manor House, caring for the things there, for the furniture, plate and pictures which they never expected to use or see used, but which they looked on as a kind of trust. They sewed for long hours, making great stores of things for the household. They went among the village people, helping those who were sick or poor. The rare visits of Sir Hugh disturbed the quiet order of their lives but only for a few days at a time. They used to read together in the evening, chiefly serious books, and they came to have a great love for the works of Bishop Andrewes and of Leighton. It was from them that they learned the religion which John Fletcher never taught them, of which his successor knew little.

“Sometimes, after being in the village or

walking on the downs they used to go into the church and sit there together for half-an-hour. After a while, instead of sitting, Mary Fletcher used to kneel, and soon Lady de Fresney followed her example. A shyness prevented their speaking to each other about their prayers or even acknowledging that they prayed. Their visits to the church were a secret between them, almost a secret from each other since they did not speak about them, or plan to go there or say that they had been there.

“As years went on the visits to the church became more frequent and the prayers longer. So they grew old together, and at last they began to speak to each other, timidly, about what was in their hearts.

“Lady de Fresney heard, little by little, all Mary Fletcher’s memories. She learned that her maid, the quiet subdued woman who served her patiently, had once known the fulness of life. Love’s chalice had been put to her lips and she had tasted the wine in it. Then it had been snatched away again.

“Mary learned that Lady de Fresney was a woman of a closely guarded secret, the secret of her own dreams. She had never known love, or the rapture of surrender of herself; but she had imagined what such things might be, and what it might be like to have children of her own to

climb on her and kiss her. She spoke haltingly to Mary of what her life might have been if God had spared her the curse of her fortune and given her a lover instead.

"Neither of them ever spoke a bitter word about Sir Hugh or allowed themselves to think that he might have done otherwise than he did. Lady de Fresney had given all she had to give, her fortune. Mary Fletcher had given up all she had, her love. Both had learned to endure patiently, uncomplainingly, the long years of their empty lives. And that is the hardest lesson of all to learn, to endure without murmuring, rebelling or cowardly shrinking."

"So that," I said, "is your idea of Fortitude."

"Never to complain," said Maturin. "Never to be rebellious, never to fail in courage, never to surrender, to remain whatever happens, master of oneself. That is Fortitude."

"A drab virtue," I said, "not one that I should care to go in for myself. I prefer the shining armour type of courage."

I pointed to the knight on the church wall. But Maturin turned away from him.

"Drab," he said, "drab. It is the virtue of Calvary. All the glory of all heavenly life shines on it. And they that practise it walk hand in hand with God."

## IX

### RICHARD BENTLEY

I CAME on the old brass one day in a corner of the tower. The figure cut on it was plain enough. I made it out to be that of an eighteenth century divine, clad in his surplice, with a pair of broad bands round his neck. The lettering was more difficult to decipher, for the brass had undergone hard usage while it formed part of the flooring of the church, before Maturin rescued it and set it up against the wall of the tower. I failed altogether to make out the name, and it was with some difficulty, by the help of a good deal of guessing, that I read the text. It was in the Vulgate Latin, which made my guessing more difficult, but I got it in the end and got it right. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

"That," I said to Maturin, "is an odd text to have chosen. A vicar of Bindon Parva—I suppose this man was one of your vicars?"

"Yes," said Maturin, "Richard Bentley was here for many years."

"Oh, that's the name, is it?"

I peered at the brass again, but could make out nothing except the Latin text. Maturin, as usual, had his information from sources not open to me.

"What I mean to say is this," I went on. "A vicar of Bindon Parva can hardly have had the chance of bartering his soul for the whole world, or even any considerable portion of it. I should have supposed that a country parson in a place like this would have escaped that particular temptation."

"Richard Bentley," said Maturin, "might have been a bishop if he had chosen."

"And he renounced the bishopric to save his soul? Was that it?"

"Yes," said Maturin.

"I've heard some hard things said of bishops," I replied, "but I never heard it implied that they were inevitably damned, *ex officio* by the mere fact that they are bishops."

"I think," said Maturin, "that Richard Bentley would have lost his soul if he had accepted the bishopric that was offered to him. I am unwilling to judge any man but certainly Lord Carnalway tried to do a wicked thing that night."

The name of Lord Carnalway meant something to me, though at first I could not think what. As Maturin told me the story I remembered. I

must have read about the man in some book of eighteenth century memoirs. He had an unsavoury reputation as a gambler and a rake, and in his day he was notorious. His character was scarcely made any more respectable by the fact that he had considerable ability and from time to time took part in the government of the country.

Maturin began his story by quoting, precisely as if he were reading aloud, part of a letter written to this Lord Carnalway.

“ ‘Most honoured Patron and My Most Gracious Lord——’

“ Lord Carnalway read aloud the letter which he held in his hand.

“ ‘News has come to me from Milchester that the Dean is near dying and cannot, so the physicians say, live beyond another week at the furthest. The Deanery is no great preferment, having but an annual stipend of £900, together with a house in the close by the Minster, which house is well enough. Yet, though the post be far less than your Lordship has often promised me, I would be willing enough to take it, if it can be procured for me, and that is doubtless within your Lordship’s competence. Further, I venture to pray . . .’

“ Sir Giles de Fresney leaned back in his chair and laughed.

“ ‘Carnalway as dispenser of the loaves and fishes of the Church militant here on earth. Certainly England is, as they say, the land of absurdities.’

“ ‘This was the Sir Giles who impoverished and nearly lost the estate of Bindon Parva by his gambling and fast living. He was a close friend of Lord Carnalway, the greatest rake in London, whose wild doings were told all over the kingdom, but who had, what Sir Giles had not, brains and ambition.

“ ‘ ‘Who’s the humble petitioner?’ Sir Giles asked.

“ ‘ ‘Carney’s tame parson,’ said Jennie Milman, who was stretched on the sofa near the window.

“ ‘She was the most impudent, and also the most beautiful of all the women of her kind at that time. Her beauty anyone could see who looked at her, shining dark eyes, a great red mouth, and a smooth skin as dark as an Italian’s. Her impudence was plain from her gestures and her words, as when she spoke of Lord Carnalway as Carney, though Sir Giles called him by his proper name; and Richard Bentley, once fellow and tutor of Sidney Sussex College in Cambridge, addressed him as ‘honoured patron and gracious lord.’ It was this impudence, more even than her beauty, which attracted

Lord Carnalway to her, so that he had her for his mistress, as all the world knew.

“ ‘Carney keeps a tame parson,’ she said, ‘to save his soul for him.’

“ ‘As I keep you to help to damn it,’ said Lord Carnalway.

“ Sir Giles laughed aloud, and Jennie Milman laughed too, though not so heartily. She had a sharp tongue and it always vexed her when another tongue proved sharper. Perhaps she would have found an answer had the speaker been Sir Giles or anyone else except her patron. Of him she had learned to be a little afraid.

“ ‘Poor Dick shall have his Deanery,’ said Lord Carnalway, ‘if I can get it for him.’

“ But that neither Lord Carnalway nor anyone else could do because the Dean of Milchester made fools of the physicians by recovering from his sickness, recovering so completely that for many years afterwards he enjoyed the poor £900 a year and the house which was ‘well enough.’

“ This was a disappointment to Richard Bentley and he wrote another letter to his ‘honoured patron’ full of flattery, begging that some other preferment should be found for him. He had a good claim on Lord Carnalway, for he had given up his fellowship at Cambridge to go abroad in charge of the young lord who made the Grand Tour, as many English gentlemen did

at that time. When the two years of travel were over the pair came back to England, Lord Carnalway to live the kind of life he did live, and to take the part in politics which befitted the head of one of the great Whig houses; Richard Bentley to await preferment, indifferently provided for as domestic chaplain in Manton Manor, his lordship's great house in Lincolnshire.

“‘Something must be done for poor Dick,’ said Lord Carnalway, when it was plain that the Dean of Milchester did not mean to die.

“‘My parson at Bindon Parva is more considerate,’ said Sir Giles. ‘He has died. Shall I give the parish to your man, Carnalway?’

“Bindon Parva was no fat living then any more than it is now, but Richard Bentley was glad enough to take it, on the understanding that he was not to be left to spend all of his life there. Lord Carnalway promised to look out a deanery or a bishopric for him, and no doubt meant to keep his promise. Richard Bentley would have made a good enough bishop. He was a scholar, and according to the standard of his time, a well living man. There was no scandal about him, and if he drank too much port when he got it that was a venial sin. But neither deanery nor bishopric was easy to come by. There were many claimants for each vacant

place, and there were patrons who pushed the claims of their friends more zealously than Lord Carnalway did those of Richard Bentley.

“Three years passed. Richard Bentley, chafing under repeated disappointments, was still at Bindon Parva. Lord Carnalway, whose way of living had by no means improved, was beginning to tire of the petitions of his old tutor, just as he was beginning to tire of the fine eyes and saucy tongue of Jennie Milman.

“Then, unexpectedly, Richard Bentley’s chance came.

“Lord Carnalway found that he must ride down to Weymouth. His Majesty the King was there, bathing in the sea to the wonder and delight of his Dorsetshire subjects, chaffering with fishwives over the price of sole, taking the air on the parade between the houses and the beach. Since England cannot get along without her King it was necessary from time to time that statesmen and Ministers should go to Weymouth and there disturb the peace of this quiet monarch with discussions of great affairs. Among others Lord Carnalway rode down to Weymouth, being by chance at that moment a man of great weight, since the Government wanted his support and it was not known whether he would give it. He might just then have asked for almost anything he chose with a good chance of getting it.

“Richard Bentley, though he lived very remote from the great world in Bindon Parva, knew this. He managed to keep himself informed of the political movements of the time, and being a shrewd man, understood what he heard. He also kept himself informed about church affairs, and so he knew that an Irish bishop had just died. The vacant see, Kilfenora, was in the county of Galway; but it had a good income, and in those days it was not held necessary for an Irish bishop to reside in his diocese. Richard Bentley was quite willing to accept the responsibility for the souls of a few thousand Connaught ‘savages’ in return for £5,000 a year, on which he could live very comfortably in London, Bath or Tunbridge Wells.

“Lord Carnalway rode down to Weymouth and Sir Giles de Fresney went with him. They turned aside from their direct road and slept two nights in the Manor House at Bindon Parva. There Richard Bentley went to see his patron and pressed his claim for the Irish bishopric. He could not deny the promises he had made, but he was in an ill humour when he found himself called upon to fulfil them. When Bentley left the Manor House that night he said to Sir Giles :

“‘Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?’

“Sir Giles, who had enjoyed little education, did not recognise the saying, and defended the character of his parson.

“‘The man’s peaceful enough,’ he said, ‘and has made no trouble nor done any mischief in Bindon Parva.’

“A clergyman might have a worse character. Many have. But Richard Bentley had done no good there either.

“‘Well,’ said Lord Carnalway, peevishly, ‘Dick shall have his bishopric. If he goes to Galway he’ll hardly be able to plague me any more.’

“Jennie Milman also went to Weymouth, in a travelling carriage of Lord Carnalway’s, which she made his men give after his lordship had left London. She was aware that her beauty was beginning to fade and could not but know that her coarse impudence was not so attractive as it had been. Being in fear that she would soon be discarded and cast adrift to fend for herself she became very anxious to keep her hold on Lord Carnalway. She made the mistake which many women make in her position. She clung too closely, pushed herself into his company too often, and thus wearied him more quickly than she need. It was to keep in touch with him, lest he should forget her, that she followed him to Weymouth. Therein she blun-

dered badly. It is better for a woman that a man should forget her for awhile than that he should be angered at her importunity.

“Lord Carnalway was angry. He did not want her in Weymouth, where he had business with the King. He regarded it as insolence that she should have taken his carriage for her journey. A few years before he would have laughed at that as an amusing example of Jennie’s impudence. She had done worse things without angering him then. In Weymouth he received her very coldly. Nevertheless he did receive her. She lived there at his expense and more than once he and Sir Giles supped with her and found the evening pass pleasantly enough. A country town is dull for fine gentlemen, and no one ever claimed that the court of King ‘Farmer’ George was amusing.

“It was on the third evening which Lord Carnalway spent with her that Richard Bentley came to Weymouth. He had ridden there by the rough path which runs along by the cliffs and he arrived late in the afternoon. He put up at a cheap inn where he made his dinner off boiled meat and beer. Then he put off his riding clothes and dressed himself in his best suit which he had carried with him in a saddle bag. After that he made inquiry for Lord Carnalway’s lodging and went there to seek him. When he

found that his lordship was not at home he sat down in the ante-room to wait his return. He waited a long time. He might have waited all night if a servant maid had not taken pity on him and told him where to find Lord Carnalway. She gave him this information with much nodding, smirking and many sly looks, but she did not say plainly, although she knew, that Lord Carnalway was with his mistress. Richard Bentley would not have pushed his way into Jennie Milman's lodging had he known that it was there he was going. He knew that a parson, however complacent and tolerant, is not welcome when a man is with his mistress; but though the maid grinned and winked she did not speak plainly, and Richard Bentley, having no reason to suppose that Jennie Milman or any such lady was in Weymouth, went off to the house of which the maid told him.

“It was late, after midnight, when he arrived. He found there Sir Giles de Fresney somewhat drunk, Lord Carnalway passably sober, and Jennie Milman very drunk indeed. Lord Carnalway had shown earlier in the evening that he was utterly weary of her and that her antics amused him no more. The poor woman had tried to regain his attention if not his affection, by becoming more and more outrageous both in speech and behaviour. To stimulate

herself to fresh shamelessness she had drunk glass after glass of wine, far too many glasses. When Richard Bentley entered the room she was standing half naked on the table hiccupping out a song. Sir Giles smiled a fatuous approval of her effort and applauded. Lord Carnalway sat silent with a look of cold contempt on his face.

“When Richard Bentley came in he greeted him :

“‘Have you come for your bishopric, Dick? Well, you shall have it, on my word of honour as a gentleman you shall have it and be called “my lord.”’

“Poor Richard Bentley seized his patron’s hands, bent low over them and babbled gratitude.

“‘On one condition,’ said Lord Carnalway.

“‘On any condition,’ said Richard Bentley. ‘I shall deem it an honour to accept any condition your lordship proposes.’

“‘Well said, Mr. Parson,’ said Lord Carnalway, ‘and here is the condition. You shall marry Jennie Milman and take her off my hands. Then you shall be Bishop of Kilfenora, and I shall be rid of the pair of you.’

“No doubt the devil had entered into the man or he would not have made such a proposal. He had drunk too much. His temper had grown bad

and worse as the evening went on. The woman's indecencies of act and speech had soured instead of inflaming him. He was in a mood for any evil.

“‘But—but—but——’ stammered Richard Bentley.

“His eyes wandered from the grinning face of his patron to the woman on the table. How much she understood of what had been said I do not know. But she was conscious that in some way or other she was being offered to the clergyman. She leered at him.

“‘This,’ said Richard Bentley, recovering himself a little, ‘is no doubt one of your lordship’s jokes and an excellent one. Yes, faith, as good a joke as any I have heard.’

“He attempted to laugh, but it was only a half-hearted cackle which came from him.

“‘It’s no joke at all,’ said Lord Carnalway. ‘I’m as serious as the gallows. Come, now, make your choice. Jennie Milman with £5,000 a year and all men calling you “my lord,” or preaching sermons for the rest of your days to Sir Giles’ empty pew.’

“‘My pew will be empty enough, I warrant you,’ said Sir Giles thickly.

“‘Get down off that table, Jennie,’ said Lord Carnalway, ‘and give a good kiss to your husband that is to be.’

“She sat down and slid off the table, display-

ing the greater part of a pair of well-shaped legs. Then she staggered towards Richard Bentley. He drew away, nervous and ashamed, backing till he reached the door.

“‘This is—I ask your lordship’s pardon for saying so. But this is—this is——’ He made his protest desperately. ‘This is an outrage on my cloth.’

“‘I’ll outrage your cloth much worse than that before I’ve done with you,’ said Lord Carnalway. ‘Have you got a Prayer Book in your pocket?’

“‘All parsons carry Prayer Books in their pockets,’ said Sir Giles, laughing drunkenly.

“But Richard Bentley had not got a Prayer Book. That was a thing which he did not commonly carry about with him. Oddly enough, Jennie Milman possessed one hidden away in the bottom of her trunk. Why such a woman carried a Prayer Book about with her it would be hard to guess.”

Maturin looked at me as if he expected me to solve the mystery of Jennie’s Prayer Book. All I could do was to assure him that such odd things had happened before.

“The poet Pope,” I said, “knew a good deal about the ladies of his time, and he described the dressing-table of—not of a Jennie Milman but of a fashionable young beauty. On it, he says

there were 'Puffs, powders, patches, Bibles, billets doux.' The Prayer Book you mention, Maturin, was not more out of place among Jennie's petticoats than the Bible among the billets doux."

"At all events," said Maturin, "she had one; and when she understood that it was wanted she staggered off to her bedroom to fetch it. Lord Carnalway followed her. Richard Bentley might have escaped from the house before worse happened, but the thought of the bishopric restrained him. The lure of £5,000 a year was very strong to such a man, and he knew that if he offended his patron his chances of promotion were gone for ever."

"There was a French king once," I said, "who, though he was a Huguenot, said that Paris was well worth a mass. No doubt a bishopric bought by enduring a joke was bought cheap. The marriage would not have been valid, I suppose. Bentley could have repudiated it when Lord Carnalway was sober again."

"It was with that thought in his mind," said Maturin, "that he stayed where he was with Sir Giles leering at him, until Lord Carnalway returned carrying a small Prayer Book. He had Jennie Milman by the hand, and he wore over his clothes one of her nightgowns.

"'Now,' he said, 'I shall marry you. I have

my surplice and my book. My signet ring which I shall lend for the ceremony, will serve well enough. Stand beside the blushing bridegroom, Jennie, and answer aloud when I bid you.'

"Then he began :

" 'Dearly beloved, we are gathered together in the sight of God and——'

"Richard Bentley interrupted him. A courage which he did not know he possessed enabled him to say :

" 'Stop, my lord, stop. This is blasphemy.'

" 'Five thousand a year, Dick. Five thousand a year, and a damnably handsome wife,' said Lord Carnalway.

"Then he went on :

" 'And of this congregation.' Sir Giles is the congregation. Wake up, Giles. You cannot serve as a witness if you fall asleep in the middle of the service. '——To join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony, which is an honourable estate instituted by God in the time of man's innocence.' There's nothing said about the woman's innocence, Jennie. The Prayer Book knew better than to suggest that. '——Signifying unto us the mystical union which is betwixt Christ and——'

"At the sound of the title of our Redeemer Richard Bentley, greedy, graceless, cowardly as he was, awoke suddenly to a better mind. All

his worldliness dropped off him for an instant. He spoke as a priest of God.

“‘I will listen to no more,’ he said. ‘This is too vile a mockery of sacred things.’

“Lord Carnalway saw that he was in earnest and ceased jeering.

“‘Have you counted the cost of refusing, Parson Dick?’ he asked.

“‘I have,’ said Richard Bentley.

“‘Five thousand a year and a title along with it,’ said Lord Carnalway, ‘and I swear on my immortal soul, if I have one, that you shall not be bishop unless you go through with the marriage.’

“‘I have counted the cost,’ said Richard Bentley, ‘and may God forgive you for what you are minded to do this night, if indeed this be not that sin against the Holy Ghost for which there is no forgiveness.’

“He turned and left the room. Lord Carnalway flung the Prayer Book at him as he went. Then he filled himself another glass of wine and drank it off.

“Richard Bentley rode back next day to Bindon Parva, a bitterly disappointed man. All his hopes were gone and he knew now that he would spend his life in poverty, the parson of an obscure country parish. For two days he sat brooding in the study of the Vicarage. He

found no consolation in the thought that he had done right. Sometimes the feeling uppermost in his mind was that he had been a fool. No comfort came to him from on high, because he had never learned to ask for it and did not look for it. He was so miserable that he often groaned aloud.

“On the third day, which was Sunday, he went to church to read the service. There, though he expected no such thing, a kind of peace came to him. He did not know whence it came or why. It was like the quiet of a child which sleeps exhausted after an outburst of passion and tears, sleeps, although in its sleep it still sobs sometimes. The bitterness had not left Richard Bentley, but the peace seemed to flow over it. When the service was ended, the congregation, after the fashion of those days, went out leaving him there. He knelt alone, and for the first time since his childhood, said a real prayer. ‘God help me.’ That was all.

“Afterwards when the recollection of his disappointment came on him like a fierce pain and he felt that he must curse himself, curse his fate, curse the God who directs fate, he used to go into the church and sit there until peace came to him again. It always did come.

“Soon he learned not only to wait for it but to ask for it, and with it to ask for other things,

even for forgiveness for Lord Carnalway who had done him so terrible a wrong. At last the day came when he saw that wrong had not been done to him, that if he had been given his heart's desire he would have lost something infinitely more precious than anything he could have gained.

“ ‘ What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? ’

“ Thereafter, if not a happy man he was at least a man of calm content.”

## X

### RAOUL BRUNEAU

THE working of the ecclesiastical mind is a perpetual source of wonder to me. I have told these stories of Maturin's to various people to whom they might be supposed to be interesting, that is to say people connected with the Church and religious life generally. One lady—a devout Roman Catholic—was pained and troubled over the story of Hugh Freyne, which, she declared, could not possibly be true. No priest, so she assured me, would ever marry, whatever other sin he might commit. Neither she nor anyone else to whom I told the stories had the least difficulty over Maturin's claim to have heard the stories from the actors themselves. This, I confess, seems to me an evidence of a total want of mental balance in Maturin; but Lionel, my partner, the most ecclesiastically-minded man I know, has actually made up a sort of explanation of Maturin's visions, delusions or whatever they are.

On the other hand, every one of these friends of mine has promptly and decidedly kicked against the story of Raoul Bruneau, the French priest. This, they say, is incredible. The thing

could not have happened as Maturin told it, and they refuse to believe a word of it, not—as I have said—because they have any difficulty about Maturin's claim to a kind of inspiration, but because the story hangs on a breach of ecclesiastical discipline. I myself should call it nothing worse than a departure from the ordinary course of Church etiquette. But that is not the way it strikes people with ecclesiastical minds. To them the incredibility of this one story goes far to discredit all the rest. Perhaps, on that account, I ought to leave it out of my collection. I have been asked, even begged, to do so. But Maturin told it to me, and though I cross-questioned him carefully, he insists that Raoul Bruneau, once parish priest of Monte Villiers, was for a time vicar of Bindon Parva, and that without any renunciation of his faith or act of departure from the Church into which he was baptized. I myself see no particular difficulty in believing this, but I think it only fair to record the fact that other people, and they the best qualified to judge, find it totally unbelievable.

“Raoul Bruneau,” Maturin began, “the curé of the parish of Monte Villiers, was awakened between one and two in the morning. He raised himself on his elbow and was aware that light was coming through the curtains of his bed. He thought for a moment that dawn had come. But

when he was thoroughly awake he knew that it was not the dawn he saw. He pulled aside the curtains of the bed, stepped out on the polished floor, went to a window and opened it. 'An ominous red flare showed above the trees, and through the trees there came flashes of brighter light.

“ The priest's house stood in the village street. At the back of it stretched the park of the château where M. le Marquis lived with his wife. He was an old man, the Marquis, and his wife was an old woman. Their only son lived chiefly in Paris, having a position in the King's Court. Perhaps the old people were lonely. Certainly they liked the company of the curé and he spent much of his time in the château.

“ There was a great deal in common between the Marquis and the young priest. Both found pleasure in the sceptical literature of 18th century France. Both of them appreciated the mordant wit of Voltaire, the rationalism of the Encyclopaedists, and even the sentimentalities of Rousseau. They read together parts of Gibbon's famous history, and though neither one nor the other of them could speak English, they read the language well enough to relish the courtly sneers of the historian, especially those in the chapter which treats of the rise and spread of Christianity.

“The curé said Mass regularly. M. le Marquis heard Mass a little less regularly. But they were both of the opinion, lucidly expressed by Gibbon, that all religions are to the philosopher equally false and to the statesman equally useful, since they serve to keep people in subjection. Christianity perhaps is particularly useful. The promise of golden joys hereafter ought to reconcile the peasant to a good deal of suffering here.

“It was the opinion of the Marquis that the peasants existed to toil and suffer in order that men of his class might have comfort, leisure and opportunity to live pleasantly. The priest, who shared some of the nobleman’s privileges, also shared his views about peasants.

“Unfortunately for both of them and for the French aristocracy, the religion which the priest taught with some diligence, to which the Marquis gave a certain measure of cynical support, did not prove equal to the task assigned to it. The people ceased to be satisfied with the promise of heavenly joys and began to insist, roughly and in unreasonable ways, on securing a share of such pleasures as the earth afforded. There were rumours of wild doings in various parts of France. The houses of noblemen were burnt. The noblemen themselves were occasionally killed, those of them who were not wise enough to foresee the coming storm, and fly, like Lot and

his daughters, before destruction reached them.

“ Stories, vague at first, then detailed and well authenticated, reached Monte Villiers of such doings elsewhere. In Monte Villiers itself there were mutterings. There were men among the villagers who talked loud and threatened much. Jean Boutin, the blacksmith, was the leader of them. One day he stood in the door of his forge with his head covered while the Marquis rode by. A groom, at his master’s orders, had slashed him across the face for his insolence. But Jean Boutin did not take off his hat any more for that, and after the Marquis and the groom rode by, shouted curses after them. The same Jean Boutin spat insolently—with evident intention of being insolent—when the priest passed him in the street. Several men and women standing by laughed at the action as at an excellent jest.

“ Monsieur le Marquis, fearing more unpleasantness and perhaps worse, went off to Paris in his coach. Paris at the moment seemed more secure than Monte Villiers. The priest stayed on, though he would have been very glad to go to Paris too.

“ When he went to the window of his room that night and saw the red glow in the sky and the flashing of light among the trees he had little doubt what had happened. When he opened his window and heard the noise made by a

clamorous mob, he had no doubt at all. The château was burning. The people, headed no doubt by Jean Boutin, had set it on fire and were exulting in the destruction.

“Raoul Bruneau was no coward and he had confidence in his own power of controlling his parishioners. When a man has been master, or one of the masters of people for some time, it is very difficult to believe all at once that the mastery is gone. It was impossible to believe that the scepticism which he and others like him regarded as freedom should have reached the dull minds of the untaught multitudes and that they too should welcome freedom from the old trammels of religion and laws based on religion.

“Raoul Bruneau dressed himself with care and due consideration for his dignity. He did not mean to be hustled into unseemliness by the action of a mob. Then he let himself out of his house and walked quickly through the village.

“The street was deserted. The doors of the houses were wide open, and there were lights burning in some of the windows, but there was no one to be seen and no sound of voices, except the distant shouting from the château. The priest walked on. At the end of the street, just opposite the château gates, he came on a man who lay moaning. The priest recognised him. He was the major domo of the Marquis, a man

who was much in his master's confidence and managed the affairs of the château. He had been savagely beaten and lay there unable to move. The priest bent over him, trying to get from him some account of what had happened ; but the man did little except groan. Almost the only intelligible words which the priest caught were the name of Jean Boutin, the smith. He, it seemed, had been responsible for the thrashing which had nearly killed the man. Bruneau, though he was a priest, felt in no way called on to succour this man. When he could learn no more from him he left him and went off to the château.

“ He passed through the gates which lay wide open and leaving the main avenue, took a short cut to the château through the trees. In front of him, swinging from an oak, hung the body of Jules Lefebvre, who had been the steward of the estate. He had ruled the village and the villagers very much to the advantage of the Marquis, sometimes to the advantage of the priest, never to the advantage of the people. Now he was dead, hanged from the branch of a tree almost within sight of the château. Here was evidence enough that the people were furious and that there was danger for anyone suspected of being a supporter of the old order. But Raoul Bruneau did not hesitate. Instead of fear, a bitter anger possessed him. He took no thought

for himself or what might happen to him if he went on.

“As he came near the château he was met by two girls running. One he recognised as a waiting-maid of Madame la Marquise, a girl who had been educated and well brought up, who was treated by her mistress more as a friend than as a servant. The other was a girl out of the kitchen. Both of them were running fast. Their clothes had been almost stripped from them. Only some torn rags covered them. But terror of worse things made them unconscious of their nakedness. Close behind them were a number of rough boys who chased them with yells. The priest stood between the girls and their pursuers. The lads—there was not a grown man among them—hesitated. The priest spoke to them with authority and anger in his voice, as one who has the power to punish and is goaded into using it. At first the boys shouted curses. Then their shouts subsided into mutterings. At last they turned back from their chase and allowed themselves to be herded towards the château like sheep. So far the priest’s belief in his own authority was justified.

“In the light of the burning house Raoul Bruneau saw a mob, drunk with wine and rage and hate and greed. There is no more terrible sight. Wine had been taken from the cellars,

casks broached, bottles broken. Furniture, tapestry, pictures and clothing had been dragged out of the house. Men staggered about with loads of loot, dropping their burdens and filling their arms afresh when they came on new things which took their fancy. Drunken women, lost to all sense of decency, danced and yelled, waving bottles in their hands. Some draped themselves fantastically in rich fabrics torn from the rooms in the château, and then, in sheer lust of destruction, flung them into a bonfire which had been made on the lawn, as if the burning house was not fire enough to satisfy them.

“A man, plainly very drunk, lurched out of the house, carrying in his arms a statue of the Blessed Virgin. The priest knew it and knew where it came from. Near the great bedroom where the Marquis slept was a little oratory, and in a niche there this statue of the Virgin had stood. The place had been deserted for years. No one ever knelt there or prayed. The Marquis would have sneered at the thought of such private devotions. Raoul Bruneau would have been scarcely more respectful to a devotee, but the sight of the drunken peasant with the image in his arms roused him to furious rage. It was an outrage that a man like that, grimed with dirt and reeking with sweat, should lay

hands on—a lady. Was not the Blessed Virgin Mary recognised as a lady in all polite society?

“When the man flung his burden into the bonfire the people cheered and Jean Boutin shouted an obscene insult. He was the one man in all the mob who was sober enough to have any self-control. Therefore the priest singled him out, walked up to him and bade him call his rabble off.

“Jean Boutin looked at him for an instant in astonishment at such audacity. Then he struck the priest full in the face. He was a powerful man with muscles made like iron by his trade. Raoul Bruneau fell. In a moment the people crowded round him. They struck him, kicked him, spat on him, yelled all kinds of foul insults. Then someone shouted that he should be hanged, as Jules Lefebvre, the steward, had been hanged. They pulled him to his feet and stood round him in a jeering circle while someone went to look for a rope.

“Raoul Bruneau, dazed by the blow which had felled him, only half comprehended what was said and what the people meant to do. He was roused to full consciousness by Jean Boutin. The blacksmith had found an old silver crucifix. With this in his hand he approached the priest and bade him spit on the figure of Christ on the Cross.

“Raoul Bruneau had more than once done worse than spit upon the Cross. With delicate wit and polished sneers he had dismissed the claims of the Redeemer of mankind. In company with the Marquis, over wine he had mocked at the deluded fools who died for Christ because Christ died for them. Yet the action of Jean Boutin roused him to complete possession of himself. That such a proposal should be made to him by a blacksmith was an intolerable insult. He was no longer possessed as he had been by furious passion. He became icy cold and bitterly contemptuous. There was in him no feeling of fear at all. He knew that he could not fight. He was young and strong, but what can one man do against a crowd? He felt besides that it would be something of a degradation to fight with beasts like these. Instead he cursed them, cursed his own people to whom he had given the sacraments, to whose confessions he had listened. He cursed them in French which they understood, in Latin which they vaguely feared. He condemned their bodies to diseases which would rack them, their souls to eternal torments, their children for generations to come to misery and pain.

“If he had shown the smallest sign of fear, if he had shrunk ever so little, he would certainly have died that night. But because he was

utterly contemptuous of them, the people feared him. The circle round him widened, men and women drawing back overmastered by his fury, in superstitious dread of his Latin curses. No one found, or tried to find, a rope to hang him with.

“Only Boutin, the smith, still urged the people to go on, taunting them with cowardice. Raoul Bruneau turned on him. All he had said to the crowd, all the threats he had uttered, were now for Jean Boutin and him alone.

“‘I lay on you, Jean Boutin,’ he said, ‘the full responsibility of this night’s crimes. Neither in life nor in the grave shall you escape the anger of God. When the time comes, as it will come sooner or later, I myself shall trample you into the dust.’

“Then he turned and strode away. No man stopped him. Even Jean Boutin was cowed for the moment. He shouted a threat that the priest’s time would come when the people had finished with the château. But he made no attempt at pursuit.

“Astonishment at their own violence kept the people quiet next day. No one, not even Jean Boutin, wanted to do more for awhile. So the priest was safe. After dark one or two men even ventured to his house and warned him that he had better leave Monte Villiers. The village

people themselves might have made no further attack on him, but there were men coming from elsewhere, officers of the Republic, who would show no mercy to anyone suspected of sympathy with the aristocracy. The Marquis and his wife had escaped for the present. It was certain that these officers would claim a victim in Monte Villiers, and once the blood of the people was aroused again there would be little chance of life for the priest.

“Very unwillingly, with bitter anger in his heart, Raoul Bruneau left his home and his church. He made his way to the coast, dressed as a peasant, taking with him the little money he possessed. It was not much, but it was enough to bribe some fishermen to take him across to England in their boat. They landed him, wet, tired, almost penniless, on the Dorset coast.

“He was found wandering forlornly among the downs by two labourers who took him to their master. The farmer could speak no French and could make little of the priest’s story, told in broken English. But he was a kind-hearted man. Seeing the plight of the stranger he gave him food to eat and took him to the Manor House at Bindon Parva. Sir Hugh de Fresney was the nearest magistrate, and he seemed the fittest person to deal with this wandering Frenchman.

“Sir Hugh was a man who had travelled much in his youth before he married and settled down to the management of his estate. He spoke French well, as many of the English gentry did then. He had heard of the progress of the Revolution with horror, for his sympathies were altogether with the King and the nobles. It seemed to him a crime so frightful as to be unnatural, like parricide or incest, for the people to rise against their masters.

“Raoul Bruneau stayed for some weeks in the Manor House, being treated as an honoured guest. Sir Hugh liked him and would willingly have kept him until—as men still hoped it would—the frenzy of the Revolution died away and France was once more a peaceful pleasant land. But Raoul Bruneau was too proud to eat the bread of charity, however graciously it was bestowed on him. He told Sir Hugh that he must leave Bindon Parva, that he would go up to London and there make his living somehow, perhaps as a teacher.

“‘I know my own language,’ he said, ‘and there must be some who want to learn it. I am besides an educated man in other ways. Being a priest, I have learned Latin and I know something of mathematics.’

“Then Sir Hugh, respecting the priest’s independent spirit, made an offer to him.

“ ‘Stay here,’ he said, ‘and be tutor to my boys.’

“ There were two of them—Giles, the heir, who was ten years old, and another Hugh, who was eight.

“ Raoul Bruneau stayed willingly and did his duty by the two boys. They grew up with a knowledge of Latin and French, not perhaps the kind of knowledge which would have enabled them to pass examinations to-day, but something better. They understood and appreciated Latin writers and the literature of France. They learned besides to be upright men, truthful and brave. Sir Hugh was well satisfied with the tutor’s work.

“ Because Sir Hugh was a respecer of religion and a believer in the Christian creed, he and his household went every Sunday to the little church. Raoul Bruneau went with him. At first he only went because he respected the wishes of the man who had befriended him. Later on, as he learnt the English language better, he found himself attracted by the beauty of the English translation of the Scriptures, never more beautiful than when read aloud. He began to appreciate the stately dignity of the English Prayer Book. Many of the collects were familiar to him in Latin, but, as is often the way when we read familiar things in a new language, they

seemed to him to gather fresh beauty and strength in their translation. The church itself became dear to him. His own church in Monte Villiers was larger, more florid, richer in decoration, but it seemed to him that this church had something which his own missed. It was like a room which is lived in, less impressive perhaps than a salon set apart for occasions of state, but with a more intimate appeal.

“In time his work as a tutor came to its natural end. The elder of the two boys went to London with a commission in the King’s Foot Guards. The younger went to Oxford. Raoul Bruneau once more spoke of leaving Bindon Parva. But Sir Giles had another proposal to make. The vicar of the parish was a very old man and infirm. His place would soon be vacant, and then a successor must be nominated. Sir Giles said that Raoul Bruneau should be vicar of Bindon Parva.

“The French priest was a Roman Catholic, and it seems strange to us that he could or would hold office in the English Church. But at that time the division between the Anglican and Roman Churches was not so acute as it is now or as it was a century earlier. The age of scepticism had created a toleration, based not on charity but indifference. The bishop of the diocese, a classical scholar with very little

interest in ecclesiastical affairs, accepted a man of blameless life who was certainly an ordained priest. Sir Hugh de Fresney had much interest in the country, and Bindon Parva was a small remote parish. What happened there did not matter much.

“Raoul Bruneau, like most of the French Royalist priests, was more Gallican than Roman in sentiment, and had never been a firm believer in the dogmas of any church. He was willing enough to accept the English Prayer Book, receiving with it a freedom to be honest with himself. This was a thing which he learnt to value during his intercourse with Sir Hugh de Fresney. M. le Marquis had sneered at many dogmas which he professed to believe. Sir Hugh professed to believe far fewer but he respected them. Raoul Bruneau came to see that honesty in such matters is admirable. He wished, if he could not be quite honest, to be as little dishonest as possible.

“So the thing was done, and Raoul Bruneau moved from the Manor House to the Vicarage.

“He might have settled down there for the rest of his life and been happy enough if it were not for the love that he had for France, the old France of the King and the nobles. For the new France he had no love. His anger about what was done that night in Monte Villiers never left him. He looked forward to the day when the

Royal Family should be restored, and he believed that France might again be what she was before. When that day came he meant to go back. He thought he could forgive the people of Monte Villiers. He would never forgive Jean Boutin, the smith, who had been the leader. Boutin had knocked him down, threatened his life, insulted him by bidding him spit on the crucifix and by jeering at the image of the Blessed Virgin. It was himself that Bruneau thought most about, not the crucifix or the burnt image of the Virgin. Because it was of himself that he thought he was not able to forgive.

“During the years of war, when France under Napoleon was fighting desperately and gloriously, first for her existence, afterwards for empire, Raoul Bruneau’s sympathies were always with his country’s enemies. He read in church the appointed prayer for victory, England’s victory. He certainly wished for England’s victory, for he had learned to love the land of his exile. But he would have been well enough satisfied if any other nation, Austria, Russia, Spain, or all of them together, had beaten Napoleon and broken the spirit of the revolutionary armies.

“But though he said the prayer with entire consent, it could not be said that he prayed. He was not believer enough to think that God heard

him when he spoke, or that any words of his, even if heard, would alter the course of events, which, like the seasons, went their way in accordance with law. A man does not expect, by praying, to delay the coming of winter. Bruneau, though he read the words of prayer reverently enough, did not think that reading them would decide the result of a battle or modify the issue of a campaign. Yet he read the prayer gladly, thinking of the people of Monte Villiers, and especially of Jean Boutin, the smith, when he said, 'abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices.'

"He had not forgiven and did not mean to forgive. He hoped that the day would come when he himself would assist in abating the pride and assuaging the malice of Jean Boutin.

"In the end he did: but not at all as he expected or as he planned.

"One Sunday morning in the late autumn Raoul Bruneau went down to the church to set all in order for the morning service. He went an hour before the time of service because he liked to read over to himself the lessons for the day before reading them to the congregation. By this time he knew English well, but he was not over confident in reading it aloud. He had a respect for the words of the English Bible which made him willing to take some trouble to

enunciate them aright. Also he had come to find a pleasure in being alone for a while in the church. The place had an effect on him which he did not understand, calming him and soothing him.

“That morning he was not alone. Sir Hugh de Fresney met him at the gate of the church-yard. News of importance about the war had reached him from London the night before. For Englishmen it was good news, and Sir Hugh, knowing the priest’s sympathies, wished him to hear it without delay. He also thought that it ought to be announced to the people that day in church.

“As he told the news the two men walked up to the church together, meaning to enter it through the porch at the west end. In the porch they found a man lying sound asleep.

“The night before had been wild and stormy with heavy rain. That was past and the sun shone again, though the waves were still thundering on Durdle reef. The man who slept in the porch had been out in the storm. His clothes were soaked through, and the water oozing from them made a pool round him. His hair and the beard which covered his face were matted with mud and grime. His boots were so utterly worn out that the sole of one of them was

kept in its place only by a cord wound round it and over the man's foot.

"Sir Hugh and the priest stood and looked at him. They saw that he wore the uniform of a French soldier.

" 'Some wretched devil of a prisoner,' said Sir Hugh, 'who has escaped from Portland. I wonder how long it has taken him to get here. He looks half starved.'

"The man stirred in his sleep, woke, raised himself on his elbow and stared round him. His face was emaciated. His eyes seemed to have sunk into their sockets, so sharply did the bones around them stick out.

" 'I hope,' said Sir Hugh, 'that they'll give him something to eat when we send him back.'

"He took it as a matter of course that the prisoner must be sent back. No one wanted French soldiers wandering at large about the country.

"The man began to speak, begging for food, drink, pity for his condition. It stirred Raoul Bruneau strangely to hear his own language spoken again by a Frenchman. And the man not only spoke French, but French with the accent of the province where Monte Villiers was, just as the men of Monte Villiers spoke it. Suddenly the man stopped speaking. With his eyes

fixed in a terrified stare on Raoul Bruneau's face he whispered :

“ ‘ *M. le curé.* ’ ”

“ Sir Hugh realized that the escaped prisoner knew the priest. A glance at Bruneau's face told him that he had recognised the prisoner.

“ ‘ Listen to me, ’ said Sir Hugh. ‘ It won't do for me as an Englishman and a magistrate to help this man to escape, but if he is a friend of yours—— Well, nobody knows that I have been here this morning and nobody shall. I'll forget it myself. You can do what you like with the man. I shan't interfere. ’ ”

“ He left the porch and walked away leaving the two men alone.

“ Raoul Bruneau had recognised the man. At the words ‘ *Monsieur le curé* ’ the knowledge came to him that this was Jean Boutin, the blacksmith of Monte Villiers.

“ ‘ You can do what you like with the man, ’ said Sir Hugh. ‘ I shan't interfere. ’ ”

“ Raoul Bruneau knew clearly and exactly what he wanted to do with the man. He wanted to humiliate him utterly and then send him back to prison. He ordered Jean Boutin to go into the church. He bade him kneel down. It was in his mind to force him to ask pardon for all that had been done that night in Monte Villiers, to make him prostrate himself in abasement like

a penitent before the cross, in memory of the night when he had bid the priest spit on it.

“The wretched man, cowed by hunger, cold and wet, shivering with wretchedness, offered no resistance, made no further appeal for pity. He knelt as he was told to kneel, an abject creature.

“Raoul Bruneau at that moment wanted his revenge as eagerly as he had wanted it at any moment since he had fled from Monte Villiers. But he could not take it. The words he meant to make the man say were in his mind ready to be spoken. He could not utter them. He had meant to wait half-an-hour and hand the man over to the villagers to be taken back to prison. He could not do it. Instead of doing as he intended, he did something which he did not wish to do, something that he even hated doing. He raised the kneeling man and led him from the church to the Vicarage. He gave him food and drink, left him dry clothes to wear and then went back to the church and read the service.

“Long after the people had gone home he lingered in the church asking himself this question: ‘Is there, after all, a God who watches and rules the lives of all of us? And is He, as St. John says, Love?’”

## XI

### TOMMY BURKE

I do not think that Maturin would ever have told me this story of his own accord. I got it out of him by questioning and cross-questioning him about the tower which stands at one end of the Manor House and completely spoils the beauty of the building.

I wanted to know how such an erection ever came to be built. It is of no use now and so far as I could see never could have been of any use to anyone. Maturin was unwilling to talk about it, which made me suspect that there was something interesting to be told. In the end, by badgering him, I got the story out of him, though he dragged me down to the seashore and made me walk up and down the strand while he told it. I suppose he felt that the salt water and the fresh breeze somehow dissipated the rather unsavoury memory of old Tommy.

“Parson Burke,” Maturin began, “ruled the parish. What justice was done in Bindon Parva in those days was his justice. The law men obeyed was his law, and Parson Burke’s law was not always the same as the King’s. He was a masterful man, and would have ruled anywhere,

in a nation's council chamber, in the camp of an army, on the deck of a ship. Among courtly men or rude, Parson Burke would have enforced his way. In Bindon Parva he ruled by right as well as by his dominant will. He was vicar of the parish, and in those days the only power equal to his was that of the squire. But he had the squire in his pocket, for old Sir Hugh de Fresney was a kindly, weak man, and Burke, a handsome young Irishman then, had married Marion, the squire's sister. That made him one of the family and the power of the Manor House was in his hands as well as the power of the church.

“Men called him Parson Burke in public, but often he was spoken of as old Tommy Burke, and indeed there was little of the parson and nothing at all of the priest about the man. In his time the little church was neglected and fell into some decay. On Sunday mornings it was open for an hour while Burke, in a dirty surplice, scrambled through the service with the help of old Bunce, the clerk. It was Bunce, and not the parson, who knew what collect and what lessons were to be read. Very often there was a difference of opinion between them about the date, for if Parson Burke thought the psalms of the day too long he had little hesitation about changing to another day of the month. Weddings and funerals had to wait the parson's convenience.

Christenings were done in batches when babies enough had accumulated to make it worth while to unlock the church door and fill the font with water.

“One afternoon late in September, Tommy Burke and Sir Hugh de Fresney walked side by side under the chalk cliffs along the stony beach which curves westwards from Bindon Parva. The wind was from the south-west and blew strong. The flow of the rising tide, one of the great tides of the equinox, set strongly up channel. The waves broke white over the Durdle reef, flinging shining showers of spray high into the air, like wild tresses tossed from the heads of sportive water sprites. A scud of grey clouds flew fast across the sky, and behind them, to the westward, was a bank of ominous black. It was going to blow. Before morning the waves would be thundering on the shingle, and the spray over the Durdle rocks would not be tossed hair, but the fury of fiends.

“Parson Burke screwed his eyes up and peered out to sea. He scanned the waves and the sky. He looked long at the growing mountain of black cloud to the south-west.

“‘Great weather,’ he said, ‘and a great night coming. A good night.’

“Most men, if weatherwise at all, would have said that a bad night was coming. But Parson Burke formed his own judgments without much

regard to common opinions. What others called bad often seemed good to him in the matter of weather and in other matters too.

“The two men, parson and squire, reached the end of the beach and turned inland, up the rough track which led among the scattered houses of the village. They passed the Vicarage and the old church behind it. They came to the gate of the Manor House. They walked together up the drive under the tossing branches of the trees while the fallen brown leaves whirled round their feet.

“In the house their wives waited for them. Lady de Fresney was a withered woman, soured and sad because she had borne no children. Mrs. Burke, the squire’s sister, was the mother of one fine son, the love of her heart, the pride of her husband’s.

“The four dined together, waited on by men in the de Fresney livery. They dined with ceremony and with much show of old-time courtesy. In things that mattered Parson Burke ruled his wife and ignored his sister-in-law. In things that did not matter he bowed low to both of them, treating them always with outward deference and courtesy. He was a bully because he was strong, something of a courtier because he was a gentleman.

“When dinner was over the white cloth was

drawn. Fruit and wine were set on the dark table. The silver candlesticks stood each in a little pool of shadow while their light glowed back from the polished mahogany round about. Soon the two ladies went away and the men sat down again to drink and talk.

“After awhile they had drunk port enough and the servants brought a punch bowl and brandy and long pipes and the tobacco jar. Sir Hugh de Fresney fetched some papers and spread them on the table. He and Parson Burke bent over them. They were the plans, drawn carefully to scale, of the lines of a ship. The two men studied them with attention and criticized them with the skill of men who know and understand such things.

“Sir Hugh was for adding to the ship’s beam, holding that she was planned too narrow for her length and for the great sails designed for her.

“‘For damn it, Tommy,’ he said, ‘we can’t sling kegs of brandy over the weather side to keep her stiff when we race for the King’s Cup at Cowes.’

“Parson Burke wanted the fore foot cut away and the keel deepened aft.

“‘To thrash well to windward,’ he said, ‘there must ever be a strong grip on the water aft.’

“The plan before them was that of a French

*chasse marée*, the swiftest boat which sailed the seas in those days. They had need of swiftness above all things in their trade, for the King's cutters kept close watch on the coast, and the cargoes of the boats were not such as could well be taken openly up to the wharves at Weymouth or Poole. With such a boat, built on the French model, Sir Hugh de Fresney looked to sail in the races of the Royal Yacht Club—it was the Yacht Club not the Yacht Squadron then—and hoped to win the King's Cup, a thing that all his life he had been desirous to do.

“ ‘We must deepen her thus and thus,’ said Burke, tracing lines on the paper with his pipe stem, ‘and by God, she'll have the legs of anything that floats, for windward work, or on a long reach with the wind abaft the beam.’

“ ‘And nephew Jack shall sail her,’ said Sir Hugh. ‘From Portland Bill to the Solent there is no one who is the equal of your boy, Tommy. Nay, from Land's End to the Goodwins there is not among sailors his match in skill and courage. I drink to nephew Jack.’

“He raised a steaming tumbler to his lips and drank. And Parson Burke raised his glass too, willing enough to drink to his son, for the boy was his pride and the great joy of his life, the one living creature whom he loved and esteemed, whom he loved and esteemed even better than himself.

“Even as he raised his glass a fierce blast struck the house, rattling doors and windows, making a mighty roaring in the deep chimney of the dining-room. The crashing of torn trees could be heard and the far-off boom of the sea. Parson Burke listened and laughed, lifting high the tumbler which he held.

“‘To the long reach,’ he said, ‘with the wind abaft the beam, from Fécamp to the Dorset coast, and to the boy with a strong hand for the wrench and the tug of the tiller. It’s a good night, squire, a good night for the run.’

“Then he drank. There was a knock at the door of the room, and, obedient to Burke’s summons, old Ned Bunce, the parish clerk, came stumbling in with many bows and stammered apologies. He told a rambling story about his daughter. ‘My lass Madge,’ who had gone out and left the house and could not anywhere be found. The squire tittered. Parson Burke gave a great guffaw.

“‘They will do it, Bunce,’ he said. ‘Their mothers before them did it. Their daughters after them will do it too. It’s the way of all flesh. But why come troubling us? Cut an ash plant, man, cut an ash plant as you go home. Sir Hugh will give you leave to cut the best you find. If you’re afraid of the wench, and she’s a lusty one, send her up to me in the morning

and the stick along with her. But they will do it, Bunce, no matter how we beat them. They will do it, and the pretty ones are the worst.'

"If prettiness is a proof of wickedness in a girl, then Madge Bunce was in an evil plight. There was no better looking girl in all Dorsetshire. But it was not his daughter's morals which troubled old Bunce that night. The girl had taken the key of his iron chest with her. It was a key which she carried on her girdle and in going forth she had forgotten to leave it behind.

" 'And the oil for the lamps,' said Bunce, 'is in the chest.'

"That, one might suppose, was no affair of Parson Burke's. With the care of the girl's morals he might be concerned, though it appeared that he was not. But what had he to do with Bunce's oil or Bunce's lamps? Yet when he heard of what was in the chest and of the loss of the key, he snapped out an oath. Then Sir Hugh bade Bunce go down to the butler and get more oil, all the oil he wanted.

" 'And see to it, Bunce,' said Parson Burke, 'that the lamps burn clear. Midnight, man, midnight for the lighting of them. No later, mark you, for with this wind the "Gallant Deed" will fly. Fill a glass for Ned Bunce, squire. Bunce must drink. To the long reach, Bunce, with the wind abaft the beam and the

sea leaping high on the larboard quarter. Drink, Bunce, drink.'

"Old Ned Bunce, the parish clerk, who said 'Amen' to the prayers on Sundays and read the alternate verses of the psalms, sipped, sipped again, coughed and drank. Then he went down to the servants' hall and the butler gave him all the oil he needed.

"When the Manor House was rebuilt after the fire in 1781 there was set a tall tower at the end of the southern wing. The de Fresney of that time had some taste for the grandiose and liked towers. At the top of the tower is a small square room with a window which looks out across the sea. Trees were cut and a vista kept clear through the park lest the view of the sea from the tower should be spoiled, or the view of the tower from the sea.

"Ned Bunce's cottage stands lowest down of all the village houses, with its gable end turned to the sea, a gable end with one small window in it. The fishermen know that when they have the gable end of Bunce's cottage in line with the tower of the Manor House the way into Bindon Parva cove is open and there is no fear of crashing on the Durdle reef.

"It was after nine o'clock that night when Parson Burke left the Manor House. Marion, his wife, rolled in shawls and wrappings, hung

upon his arm, for the wind blew so strong that by herself she would have staggered. At the gate of the Vicarage Ned Bunce met them and whispered a few words in the parson's ear.

“ ‘Come, Marion, my dear,’ said Burke to his wife. ‘Let me conduct you to the house and set you out of the storm. Then I shall see what this foolish fellow wants.’

“ Marion Burke wished to stay, wished to hear what Bunce had got to say. Her heart was full of fear that night, for her boy was on the sea and she could hear the loud crashing of the waves. When a woman is fearful about her son, she thinks that every voice speaks news of him, that every message is about his safety. But she made no protest against her husband's words. Most courteously he led her to the house, opened the door and struck a light for her, bent over her hand and kissed it. Then he went back to Bunce and heard the news.

“ ‘There'll be no pack horses from Wareham to-night, master,’ said Bunce. ‘I've had word from Long Sam of Lowes Farm. Trouble with the King's men, I reckon.’

“ Burke stood silent for a minute, thinking. Then he said :

“ ‘Take the keys of the church down to the cove, Bunce, and give them to Master Jack when he lands. Tell him what you've told me and let him stow his gear in the church.’

“ ‘In the church, master?’ stammered Bunce.  
‘In the church?’

“ Even under the rule of Parson Burke there remained in the men of Bindon Parva some faint respect for their church. No one in the parish would have called smuggling wrong, but yet—kegs of French brandy in the church. Bunce hesitated. But Parson Burke had no scruples.

“ ‘Ay, in the church, and thank God that you have a church and that I’m the parson of it. No King’s officer dare open the door of Bindon Parva church while I’m here. We’ve got four days yet ere Sunday comes on us. It’s long odds but we can make a clean shifting before that.’

. . . . .

“The King’s cutter ‘Curlew’ stood down channel, close hauled into the south-westerly wind. She was reefed down and would have made but little progress but for the scour of the ebb under her. But that same ebb raised the sea and the ‘Curlew’ plunged heavily, taking green water over her bows, pounding hard into the troughs of the seas. Captain Ellis, standing near the helmsman, reckoned that he was off the Dorset coast somewhere between Poole and Portland and was well enough content with his position.

“The look-out man, standing in the bow and clinging tight to the forestay, shouted that a sail bore down and would cross the ‘Curlew’s’

weather bow. Captain Ellis rubbed the salt water from his eyes and gazed to windward. He saw the coming craft clearly, a long lugger racing down the wind. Her great sails were bellied out. Her rail was buried deep and half her deck awash. She came tearing through the night, and a smother of white foam along with her. Her deck sloped like the roof of a house. Her crew clung with hooked arms to the weather gunwale for mere safety. Over her weather side, all black and shining wet, hung kegs and casks, ballast slung outboard where no wise sailor carries ballast at all. At her helm was Jack Burke, the parson's son. With every muscle of his body tense he leaned back, pulling hard against the tugging, kicking tiller.

"Captain Ellis' orders came sharp and decisive. And sharp was the obedience of them, for there was good discipline in the King's ships. The cutter luffed into the wind's eye, plunging desperately, while all her sails slatted with a noise like cannon shots. So Ellis brought his starboard guns to bear, one by one, on the lugger as she swept past his bows. And one by one the guns fired. The shots went wide, all of them but one. The plunging of the cutter made good gunnery impossible. It was luck, not skill, which sent one ball tearing through the lugger's foresail.

“Jack Burke at the tiller laughed aloud. With a speed like the speed of the storm itself his boat flew by. Jack glanced behind him. Through the drift of rain and showers of blown spindrift he saw the ‘Curlew’ pay off on the port tack, slacken sheets and bear away to follow him.

“‘Let her chase us till Doomsday,’ he said; ‘there’s nought that sails can catch the “Gallant Deed” to-night.’

“Nor was there. With a boat built on such lines, so manned, so steered, Sir Hugh and Parson Burke might look to win the King’s Cup at Cowes.

“Peering forward, Jack caught the glimmer of a light ahead of him, then lower down another light. He had made a good landfall, reckoning almost to a yard the pull of the tide and the sag to leeward since he left Fécamp. With a slackening of his strain on the tiller he luffed a little, steadied on his course again and flew on with the two lights dead in line.

“‘If he follows now,’ he said, ‘there’ll be good pickings for the Bindon Parva men among the ribs of that King’s ship on Durdle reef to-morrow.’

“He laughed, well pleased, and his men cheered.

“But Captain Ellis on the ‘Curlew’ seemed

well pleased too. Though his guns had missed, though in a few minutes the lugger had passed clean out of sight, he seemed content enough. Soon he also saw the lights and luffed away from them, setting the 'Curlew' on the wind again. Yet he too laughed.

" 'He has gone in,' he said. 'If he turns to sea again I have him. If he lands there are those waiting for him whom he will scarce be glad to see.' . . . . .

"Parson Burke slept sound in his curtained four-post bed, snoring heavily. Beside him his wife lay shivering with fear at every gust that struck the house. A fresh sound, the sharp tapping of small stones against the window glass, made her clutch at her breast, where her heart beat too hard and too fast. She caught her husband's arm and shook him into wakefulness. The shower of stones against the window came again. Burke pushed his wife from him, scrambled from the bed and flung the window wide.

" ' 'Tis me, master, 'tis me,' old Bunce shouted from below. 'Come to the church quick!'

" 'What's wrong?' yelled Burke.

" 'All's wrong. All's wrong,' said Bunce.

"Burke thrust his lean hairy legs into a pair of sea boots. He dragged an oilskin coat over his shoulders and pushed his arms into the

sleeves. He ran from the house, a grotesque figure with coat and nightgown flapping round his legs, the tasselled end of his nightcap blown sideways like a signal flag. He came to the church and entered it.

“Inside were men with lanterns, and Burke recognised the King’s uniform. Old Bunce was on his knees beside the figure of a man which lay flat on the ground. Burke stepped forward and lifted the coat which had been spread over the dead man’s face. One held a lantern for him, and he saw the face of his son, and a bullet hole drilled clean in the boy’s skull.

“He rose to his feet. Without a word he stretched out his arm, and with the stiff forefinger of a steady hand pointed to the door. The men looked at him, looked at each other. One, an officer, said :

“ ‘ We thought it best to bring him here. The old man had the keys.’

“Another, one of the men, muttered something about a fair fight. Then one by one they turned and left the church. Burke took old Bunce roughly by the shoulders and raised him up.

“ ‘ They were waiting for him,’ stammered the old man, ‘ waiting for him. When the boat’s keel grated on the shore they fired. But who told them? How did they come by the word that the “ Gallant Deed ” would land to-night?’

“Burke did not hear him, or if he heard he did not heed. He thrust Bunce before him down the church.

“ ‘Master, I knew—I knew——’ Bunce was babbling.

“Burke pushed him to the door and out of it.

“ ‘I knew no luck would come of using the church for such-like work.’

“Burke slammed the door. Bunce, still wailing of ill-luck, tottered away. Burke was alone in the church.

“He had to feel his way to where his son’s body lay, for it was pitchy dark. He crouched down, felt the features of the young man’s face with his hands, fondling them as a mother might fondle the limbs of her babe. He lifted the dead man’s arms and pressed the hands to his lips. He set his mouth to the cold mouth of his son and breathed on it. Old solemn words came back to him, words read impatiently many times. ‘My son, my son. Would God that I had died for thee! Oh, Jack, my son, my son.’ For an hour he crouched thus, fondling his dead son, kissing him, repeating aloud the words of David’s lamentation. Then for a while he was silent, dazed and still. Suddenly a fresh mood came on him. He rose to his feet and his whole body stiffened. There, alone in the dark of the church, he spoke curses against God his Maker,

His rage grew fierce and he shrieked his blasphemies, spitting at the altar. He vowed that he would never serve again the God who had robbed him of his son. In the blind madness of his pride he swore that he, a man, would drag the tyrant God from the throne of His cruelty and trample Him.

“At last, through very weariness, he sank upon the ground and lay there stretched beside his son, his arms round the dead boy’s neck.

“It was God’s house. Because many men had prayed there, sorrowed, agonized, repented, feared, hoped and rejoiced through many centuries; because so many hearts there had turned towards God, blindly imploring, blindly reproaching God; because of all this Godward striving God was there. And God came forth from the stones of walls soaked with centuries of prayer, from the altar on which the Body and the Blood of God’s slain Son had lain. God came to the man on the ground. Like the irresistible flow of a calm tide which covers rocks and strands in its great sweep, God came and covered this man with a sense of the divine omnipotence.

“Parson Burke stirred. He struggled up until he knelt upon his knees. The spirit of defiance was gone out of him. His pride was broken and his strength turned to weakness. His

lips formed words and after a while he uttered them aloud.

“ ‘The Lord is King.’

“The first light of the dawn came through the east window. Burke still kneeled, still softly spoke. After awhile the sunshine came, for the storm had passed. It filled the church with light and a faint warmth. And with the sunlight came the still small voice which once Elijah heard. Round Burke, in his nightshirt and his greasy oilskin coat, old Parson Burke, dishevelled and ridiculous, came the soft sunlight. Round his soul, more dishevelled, more ridiculous than his body, was wrapped a robe of tenderness. ‘The Lord is King.’ He found that out in the darkness. ‘God is Love.’ He learned that in the light.

“Through the door of the church, very quietly, came a girl with a pale face, old Bunce’s daughter. She saw the dead body on the floor. She saw the old parson on his knees. She tiptoed up the church and spoke, but Burke did not heed her. She touched his arm and spoke again. Awakened at last from his stupor, he looked at her, rose from his knees and stood facing her. The girl began to speak rapidly as if the words were forced from her.

“ ‘It was me that set them on. It was me that told. It was me that gave word to the officer how the “Gallant Deed” was due and

the lights set and all and all. It was me that did it, but I never meant, God knows I never meant, that Master Jack should die.'

" 'Why did you do it?' said Burke. 'Why?'

"There was no anger in him any more. He did not want to strike or crush the girl. Only he wondered what had prompted her strange treachery.

" 'The officer is my man,' said the girl. 'We be to wed, and I love him and he loves me. So I told him.'

"She spoke with more courage now, indeed with a sort of simple pride, but her glance dropped before Burke's gaze until it rested on the dead man at her feet. Then she burst into sudden tears.

" 'But oh, I never thought—I never meant that Master Jack should die. Be not too hard upon me, master. Curse me not for the thing I did. There is no man nor woman in the parish will speak to me after this. The very children will spit at me. Do not you curse me, master, for I am sore afraid.'

"Parson Burke, old Tommy Burke, reprobate and bully once, God's priest at last, spoke words he did not mean to speak or wish to speak, words put into his mouth for him and forced from him against his will :

" 'Neither do I condemn thee. Go and sin no more.' "

## XII

BESSIE WHITTLE

I WORKED away at the Virtues on the south wall, and after awhile came on Charity. It was exactly the kind of charity I expected. She might have been a picture labelled "Motherhood" hanging on the drawing-room wall of a suburban clerk's house. I was neither surprised nor disappointed. Maturin, in spite of the warning I had given him, was disappointed. He can scarcely have expected a picture of St. Paul's Charity, which suffers long and is kind and vaunts not and never fails. No artist could make a picture of all that the Apostle got into that rhapsody of his in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Nor do I see how any artist could draw St. James' Charity covering a multitude of sins. A maid in a second-rate restaurant spreading a clean tablecloth on top of a dirty one might convey the idea; but she would hardly do in a church. Girls, seeing her there, might think they ought to follow her example. It might perhaps be possible to draw that Charity which is above rubrics, the rubric being represented as a sort of centipede made of red tape.

That, I daresay, would have appeased Maturin. I do not know who originally said that Charity was above rubrics, but it must have been somebody whose authority Maturin respects. He is for ever quoting the saying. He quoted it at the end of the story of Bessie Whittle, but he is a little doubtful about its application there. Bessie's was an extreme case, and perhaps Charity triumphed there over something greater than a rubric. I do not know, nor, oddly enough, does Maturin, though, as I pointed out to him in the case of Hugh Freyne and the girl, he ought to know these things.

"It was Christmas Eve," said Maturin. "Ambrose Miller, the vicar, spent the morning decorating the church with holly and ivy, having the schoolmistress and Farmer Williams' two daughters to help him. The work was not finished till one o'clock. Miller went home to dinner and came back afterwards to clean up the mess that had been made. He spent an hour sweeping away broken twigs and leaves. Then he changed the altar hangings, putting away the Advent violet and setting out the festival white. Ambrose Miller was very particular about the use of the proper colours in the church, the more so as such things were new in Bindon Parva in his time. He was one of the later disciples of that Oxford movement which awakened the

slumbering catholicity of the Church of England."

"That," I said, "pretty well fixes his date. We may set him down as mid-Victorian."

"He came to Bindon Parva in 1860," said Maturin, "and was here for 22 years. At the time of which I am speaking he was a middle-aged man, old enough to see many of those whom he had known first as school children turn into men and women.

"When he finished all that had to be done in the church he went to pay a visit to a poor woman called Mrs. Whittle. She was old and lived in a cottage by herself. For many years, ever since her widowhood, she had earned her living by needlework. She managed to support herself and her daughter, till the girl grew up, for the work she did was wonderfully fine and good. Her reputation spread far beyond Bindon Parva, and ladies from distant parts of the county used to send linen and cambric to her to be embroidered and fashioned into garments. Then her sight began to fail and she was able to do less work. At the time of which I am speaking she was no longer able to sew at all. She could still knit, but there was not much money to be made that way, not enough to support her. She lived chiefly on the money sent home to her by her daughter Bessie.

“Bessie Whittle left Bindon Parva as soon as she was a grown girl and took a situation as a kitchenmaid in London. From the moment she began to earn she sent money home to her mother, very little at first when her wages were small, more afterwards, and lately, ever since her mother's sight wholly failed, as much as fifteen shillings or a pound every week. She often wrote to her mother saying that she was earning good wages and could spare the money.

“She also wrote to Ambrose Miller, the vicar. In the old days she had been a favourite of his. He taught her her catechism when she was a child in school and he prepared her for Confirmation. She was a member of a Communicants' Guild which he formed in the parish, and she often came to the altar with her mother.

“Whenever he received a letter from her, Miller took it down to old Mrs. Whittle and read it aloud. Latterly, since the old woman was nearly blind, he read aloud the letters which the girl wrote to her mother. He was always willing to listen when Mrs. Whittle praised her daughter, saying that there never was such a good girl as Bessie. He praised her too, to the delight of the mother. Being a simple-minded and pious man, he used to say that in sending her money home, Bessie was laying up for herself

treasure in heaven which neither moth nor rust would corrupt.

“Often, before leaving the cottage, he and Mrs. Whittle prayed together for the girl.

“There was one thing which greatly troubled old Mrs. Whittle. She longed very much to see Bessie. The girl had managed to pay two or three visits to Bindon Parva after she left home. But it was now four years since her mother had seen her.

“Ambrose Miller tried to console the old woman. He said that Bessie would certainly come home if she could, that holidays were hard to get, especially for one who occupied an important and responsible post, as Bessie must, seeing that she earned such good wages. He said that Mrs. Whittle must learn patience, warning her that patience is a very hard thing to learn, one of the last virtues which Christian people acquire, and that God often takes strange ways of teaching it.

“He repeated his little homily about patience that Christmas Eve, because Mrs. Whittle was more than usually sad. She had written to Bessie some weeks before begging her to come ‘home-along,’ saying that her strength as well as her sight was failing, and that this might be the last Christmas she would spend on earth. Ambrose Miller had also written to the girl,

urging her to come home for a day or two. Bessie had answered and promised to come home if she could. But on Christmas Eve there was no sign of her. It was not only Mrs. Whittle who was disappointed. Ambrose Miller had need to take to heart his own teaching about patience.

“At five o’clock he rose to go away.

“‘I am sure, Mrs. Whittle,’ he said, ‘that I shall see you at the altar to-morrow on the feast of Our Dear Lord’s birthday.’

“Mrs. Whittle smiled her promise to be there. But after smiling she sighed. Her sight was now so bad that she had to ask the help of a neighbour’s child to lead her to the church, and even there she stumbled on her way up to the altar rails unless someone guided her. It was her great hope that Bessie would have been at home to guide her and kneel beside her. Then her Christmas joy would be full indeed.

“Once more, with his hand on the door latch, Ambrose Miller spoke about patience. But he wondered even while he spoke that it should indeed be necessary to deny this old woman her greatest earthly joy in order to teach her a lesson which she had surely learned before, when the trouble of her failing sight first came on her.

“He left the cottage and went up to the church. It was snowing lightly as he passed

along the road, and the church, when he reached it, was dark and cold. He lit two candles on the prayer desk and the vesper lights behind the altar. Then he put on his surplice and said evensong.

“I told you,” Maturin explained, “that he belonged to that section of the English Church which is most particular about all Catholic observances. He liked to read the service on the eves of festivals, and he would have thought it wrong to omit it on Christmas Eve, although he knew that he would be alone in the church. Of all times of the year the afternoon of Christmas Eve is that at which people are likely to have least leisure for going to church.

“But that evening he was not alone all the time. While he was saying the psalms a woman came into the church and sat down near the door. Ambrose Miller heard her enter and looked round. He could not see who she was, for there was no light in that part of the church. After evensong was ended he walked down the church to the vestry under the tower to take off his surplice. As he passed he looked at the woman, wondering who she could be. He could not see her face because the upper part of it was shaded by the wide brim of her hat, and the lower part was covered by a fur wrap, thrown across it. But he knew, by the feathery hat and by the fur

tie, that this was not one of the village women. He was surprised, for strangers seldom come to Bindon Parva in winter time.

“While he was still in the vestry room, laying out his white stole ready for use next morning, the woman tapped at the door and walked in.

“She threw off the fur tie she wore and Miller was able to see her face. He looked at her, puzzled and uneasy. He felt frightened, though he did not know why. He was a man of little experience of the wickedness of the world. Since his ordination he had lived the sheltered life of the country parson. While he was a student he had escaped all touch of the coarser sins, protected by the grace of God, but no doubt also held back by a sort of virginal innocence and shyness which made certain things seem disgusting and terrifying to him. He did not know what the woman was, though her profession was plainly written on her face, and nine men out of every ten would have been able to call it by its name at the first glance.

“It is written of Our Lord,” said Maturin, “that finding Himself in the presence of a very sinful woman, He stooped down and wrote on the ground. I think He must have done that because it filled Him with shame to look at her. Ambrose Miller, though he did not understand what moved him, was also full of shame. His eyes left her

face, and in a moment he was looking not at her but at the floor in front of him. Yet he did not escape from his uneasiness. He was conscious that she wore soft furs and rich clothes. The heavy reek of the scent with which her garments were sprinkled came to him.

“Then the woman spoke.

“‘I had a letter from my mother,’ she said, ‘and one from you at the same time.’

“Ambrose Miller looked up again. He recognised the voice. He knew the face when he saw it a second time.

“‘Bessie Whittle!’ he said, and stretched out his hand to take hers.

“She drew back and put her hands behind her. Seeing the action, a man might have supposed she feared that Miller’s touch would defile her. But the thought in her mind was that her touch would defile him. When she spoke again it was in a cold hard tone as if she desired to hold away from his welcome and his friendliness.

“‘You said in your letter that I ought to come down here to see my mother. And she said in her letter that this might be the last Christmas that I’d ever have the chance to see her. Well, here I am. What do you think of me? Are you glad I’ve come?’

“She laughed, a horrible laugh with neither mirth nor gladness in it.

“ ‘I am glad,’ he said, ‘very glad.’

“ ‘He said that, but in his heart he was not glad. He had begged Bessie Whittle to come to her mother, but this was not the Bessie Whittle to whom he had written, not the Bessie Whittle whom he had known.

“ ‘Mother’s sight is pretty nigh gone, isn’t it?’

“ ‘She is almost blind.’

“ ‘That’s why I risked it,’ said Bessie. ‘If I thought she’d be able to see me I wouldn’t go next or nigh her.’

“ ‘You have changed, Bessie,’ he said, ‘very greatly changed.’

“ ‘Changed,’ she said bitterly. ‘Of course I’ve changed. How could a woman lead my life without changing? And I reckon my face is the least changed thing about me.’

“ ‘Your life,’ he said. ‘What life?’

“ ‘She laughed again, this time loud and harshly.

“ ‘If you can’t tell what my life is by looking at me,’ she said, ‘you must be the only man in the world who can’t. Why, I’ve met boys not left school that knew what to call me when they saw me. Look at me. Look at me, and make a guess if you don’t know.’

“ ‘She threw open the long coat she wore and displayed some jewellery round her neck, a gaudy

dress glittering with beads and a belt with a bright green clasp round her waist. The smell of her scent came to him with sickening sweetness. She pushed her face forward and leered at him.

“ ‘Now maybe you know,’ she said.

“He half knew. Like an innocent child in the presence of incomprehensible evil, he was frightened and horrified. He knew with his mind, as men possess intellectual knowledge of things which in no way touch their lives. He did not even then realize what she was.

“He sat down on the chair which stood beside the table where he had laid out his white stole for Christmas morning. He covered his face with his hands, swept by grief and fear and horror which took away his power of speech.

“ ‘It’s a good job that you know at last,’ she said, ‘for I’ve something to ask you. Here’s mother’s letter. Read it.’

“Miller took his hands from his face and received the letter from her. But he had no need to read the shaky scrawl of the old woman. He knew all about the letter. Mrs. Whittle had implored Bessie to come home again for Christmas, just for this one last Christmas. But she had asked for more than that. She said that the dearest wish of her heart was to go to church leaning on Bessie’s arm, to hear Bessie’s voice singing, ‘Hark, the herald angels,’ to be guided

by Bessie's hand up to the altar rails, to kneel there with Bessie beside her, to receive once more, in sacred communion with her daughter, the Body and the Blood of Christ.

"That was what was in the letter.

" 'I reckon,' said Bessie, 'that you might have a word to say about that. So I came to you before I went down along to her.'

"Miller sat silent. His fingers twisted the fringe of the white stole in front of him.

" 'Well,' she said, 'what about it?'

"He looked up at her, but he made no answer to her question.

" 'We never knew,' he said. 'We never guessed—— We thought—we thought that——'

" 'You must have been nice innocents then, the two of you, you and mother. Where did you think the money came from?'

" 'We thought it was your wages.'

" 'A kitchen-maid's wages! There's only one way a girl like me could earn wages so as to send home a pound a week. Could a kitchen-maid do it? If you'd thought at all—if either one or other of you had thought, you'd have known——'

" 'All we ever thought about you, Bessie,' said Miller with a sigh, 'was what a good girl you were to send your money to your mother.'

" 'You can think different in future then,' she said. 'I'm not good. Good girls don't earn

such-like wages. It's in another sort of trade that money like that is paid.'

" 'Still you did send the money,' said Miller. 'You did send it home to your mother. It made her happy to know you were willing to send it. You did send it.'

" He clung to that as something solid and firm in the mire which surrounded him. Her life was abominable, though he could only partly guess how abominable. But out of her earnings—the wages of prostitution—she had unfailingly sent money to her mother. That was a beautiful sweet thing. He saw it standing out clear against the fog of foulness behind it.

" Bessie turned away and stood with her back to him. The door of the vestry was open. She looked eastward up the church to the white-draped altar where the vesper lights still burned. She stood gazing for a minute. Then she pointed to the altar with her finger and half turned to Miller.

" 'What about it?' she said.

" Ambrose Miller broke into a passionate appeal to her. The love of the girl he had taught as a child was strong in him. His love for the old mother who waited for her was strong. The spirit of the priest awoke in him and he yearned for the soul of this sinner. He begged her to forsake her evil life. He went down on his knees

and implored her. He rose again and promised her forgiveness, her mother's, his own (though that mattered little), and God's. He told her eagerly about Christ's love for sinners. He ceased speaking to her, and in a whisper he besought God's aid to speak aright. He spoke to her again, and told her about the shepherd and the lost sheep, about Mary Magdalene and Christ's love for her, about the other woman whom He would not condemn, though others wished to stone her. He wrestled with her for her soul, sometimes calling loud to her, as if he would make her hear, even across the immense distance which separated them.

"She stood quite still with a cold, hard face like a mask. Except that she smiled a little there was no sign that she heard him. At last, when he had exhausted himself with pleading, she spoke.

" 'Look here. It's no damned use your talking that way. I ain't no sorrowing Magdalene, nor I don't want to be. So just you cut that all out, do you hear?'

"Then her voice softened a little.

" 'But what about it,' she said; 'the thing that mother wants? Will you let me, or will you turn me down when you see me there? It's up to you to say, and that's why I came to you first before I went to mother.'

“He made no answer ; but she saw ‘No’ in his face, the ‘No’ of a faithful priest who must before all else protect the divine mysteries from profanation.

“‘It’s no good my going to her,’ said Bessie, ‘unless I can do what she wants. I’ll go back again to London to-night. Better she thinks I never came than—than—knows what I am.’

“His hands trembled. His whole body shook. He tried to say ‘No,’ but neither the word nor any other sound came from his lips. The woman spoke again. The defiance and the hardness had gone out of her voice. She pleaded with him as a few minutes before he had pleaded with her.

“She told him of her love for her mother. That was the one fine feeling left in her, the solitary spark of the divine which was still alight in her. She did not say that or any such thing. She simply pleaded to be allowed to see her mother once more on the only condition on which that seemed possible. She went down on her knees and begged to be allowed to give this one last great joy to the mother she loved.

“A tide of pity flowed over Miller, pity for the girl, sinful and yet with all this love in her ; pity for the old woman whom he had visited in the afternoon. He knew what Christmas Day would be to her with Bessie by her side, the joy and peace with which she would say her Nunc

Dimittis afterwards, 'Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen——' Seen what? 'An acted blasphemy.

"He steadied himself and his face hardened. He dared say no word but 'No.'

"The woman rose from her knees and faced him.

"'All right,' she said. 'I'm beat, and I own it. I'll repent if you like. I'll say I'm sorry. I'll confess any blasted thing you choose to make me. I'll be a fallen woman in a rescue home, only let me be with my mother to-morrow.'

"He knew quite well that she was not speaking the truth. He saw with terrible clearness that if he accepted the confession she offered, he would plunge her into fresh degradation. She had sinned. She had lied about the money she sent home, to him and to her mother. Now she was offering to lie to God. And he, if he forced her to do it, would be responsible for that lie. Yet he must accept her sham penitence, a pretence not even decently clothed; or send her back to London, a bitter, desperate woman; or—could he, dared he choose the third way?

"He prayed silently; but God was silent too and no answer came. On him was laid the burden of the choice. He felt battered, beaten, wearied utterly. At last he said:

“ ‘Go to your mother, Bessie, and come here with her to-morrow.’

“ Ambrose Miller spent that night alone in the church. He abased himself for the sin he had committed. He sought forgiveness. Later on he sought light, for he came to be something less than quite sure that he had done wrong. Never any priest on any Christmas morning was in such miserable perplexity and fear.

“ At the very end of the early service, after he had given the Benediction, there came into his mind the words of His Master, spoken about such a woman as Bessie Whittle : ‘ Her sins are forgiven because she loved much.’ Yet even then he did not know. Perhaps it was the divine voice which spoke the words to him. Perhaps by his sin he had opened the doors of his heart to the falsehoods of the great deceiver.

“ For old Mrs. Whittle that Christmas Day was radiantly happy. Bessie walked with her to the church, almost the old Bessie so far as anyone could see. Her fine clothes were laid aside and she wore a frock which she had left in her mother’s keeping long before. The paint of her profession was washed from her face and the scent from her body. If anyone in the village knew or guessed what she was they did not speak to Mrs. Whittle.

"Two days afterwards she went back again to London."

"Well, Maturin," I said, "if I may quote your friend Bessie, what about it? Was Miller right or wrong?"

"Charity," said Maturin, "is above rubrics, but——"

"It seems to me a good large but," I said. "However, leaving the rights and wrongs of the thing aside, tell me the rest of the story."

"Old Mrs. Whittle died," said Maturin.

"That," I said, "I should have guessed without being told. If she was an old woman then, she could hardly be alive now. What about Miller? Did his conscience ever settle down quietly again?"

"No," said Maturin. "He never knew whether he had done right or wrong."

"I should think," I said, "he must have been a most unhappy man for the rest of his life. That kind of man is simply a victim to his conscience, and I must say that consciences, if once they get the upper hand of us, are capable of inflicting the worst kind of torture. I'm not speaking from experience there. I've always taken good care not to let my conscience make things really unpleasant, though of course I can't prevent it giving me a jab now and then. Now tell me about Bessie."

“She never came back to Bindon Parva,” said Maturin. “I do not know what happened to her, but I hope. I hope.”

“I think you may,” I said. “I’m not an expert in these matters, and my opinion isn’t worth much. Still, it seems to me there were good points about the girl. She was really fond of her mother, and she was honest.”

“Honest?” said Maturin.

“I don’t mean what’s known as an honest woman,” I said. “Of course, she wasn’t that. But she hated the idea of being a hypocrite, and that’s no small thing. I daresay lots of us won’t have as much to say when we come to give the final account of ourselves.”

### XIII

#### LIONEL DARRELL

HAVING written out Maturin's stories and as much as I could remember of my thoughts of that eccentric parson, I gave the MS. to Lionel Darrell to read. A week later he invited me to dinner and afterwards gave me his opinion of what I had done. We were sitting in his study, a room so ecclesiastically furnished that I never feel quite comfortable when smoking there.

"I don't think," he said, "that you ought to sneer at Maturin as you do. Can't you leave out all your own comments and simply tell the stories as he told them?"

"If I did that," I said, "I should give my readers the impression that I believe in all this ghost-seeing."

"And why not?"

"Why not! My dear Lionel! For the simple reason that I don't believe. The stories are incredible."

"I don't see that," said Lionel. "There's nothing in any of the stories which mightn't have happened."

“So far as the stories themselves go,” I said, “the things might have happened, as you say. But, hang it all, Lionel, you can’t believe that Maturin heard them as he thinks he did. The man is obviously mad.”

“If by mad,” said Lionel, “you mean that his mind is so completely in tune with the spiritual world that he is conscious of things to which the rest of us are deaf and blind, then most of the great saints and poets—yes, and poets too—were mad.”

“They probably were, the saints anyhow. About the poets I shouldn’t like to say anything worse than morbid.”

“If I thought that you really believed that——” said Lionel.

“I do.”

“No, you don’t. If you did I shouldn’t discuss the matter with you any further. But you don’t.”

“I certainly don’t believe that Maturin talks to people who have been dead two or three hundred years. If you are trying to argue me into saying I do, you are simply wasting your time.”

If Lionel had smiled at me then I think I should have got up and left the room. There is a kind of smile much used by those who suffer from inward illumination or from conversion to

some creed which the rest of us dislike. It is a kindly, gentle, tolerant smile and conveys a consciousness of the immeasurable superiority of the smiler. It is the most offensive thing in the world. The only proper reply to it is a kick, and that is not always possible because the smiler is often a woman and sometimes a friend. But Lionel did not smile. He began to ask me questions.

"Have you ever noticed," he said, "that it is much easier to feel devotional in some churches than in others?"

"I never feel devotional in any church," I said.

Then I was sorry and corrected the statement. I do not know that I ever feel exactly devotional anywhere, but there are some churches in which I feel that I might if I let myself go. I admitted this and Lionel went on with his catechism.

"What makes the difference," he said, "between one church and another in that way?"

"Bad music, chiefly," I said, "or a parson with a cold in his head or a woman soaked in bad scent in the next pew."

"I'm thinking of the church itself, the church when it's empty, when there's no music, good or bad, or parson, or congregation. What makes the difference then?"

"The architecture, I suppose," I said, "or the

ornaments. If you'd seen the Stations of the Cross which our parson stuck up the other day you'd know that it was impossible to feel anything but bad-tempered in his church. Or it may be the glass. You know what some of our church glass is, Lionel. I've seen windows which are like a slap in the face with a dead flat fish."

"Don't you think," said Lionel, "that the atmosphere of devotion, the thing we feel directly we enter the building, before we've looked at the ornaments or the glass, depends on the age of the church more than on anything else? I don't mean to say that all old churches have it or that all new churches absolutely lack it, but it is oftener in old churches than new."

I was not prepared to deny that some churches, and those nearly always old, do convey a sense of sanctity which one misses altogether in other, often finer, churches. Lionel went on to develop his theory. He spoke so persuasively and with such evident belief in what he was saying that I found myself in sympathy with him before he finished. It was not until afterwards, when I was back in my own rooms, that I was able to pull myself together and take a sane view again.

Lionel's theory boiled down to this. Human emotion, especially emotion of a very strong and sincere kind, has the power of soaking into the

walls of a building, charging the very stones with a certain energy which they give out again years afterwards. Hate, fear, sorrow, repentance, joy, love and hope, which have been very strongly felt by human beings in any place do not simply disappear. They more or less permanently affect the place. A house in which a large family of healthy romping children have been brought up remains a cheerful house long after the children have become men and women and gone away. A house in which some solitary misanthrope has lived for years is melancholy and for a long time remains melancholy, even if every window looks south or west and the sun shines into large airy rooms. A church is much more likely to be affected in this way than a dwelling-house because it is more frequently the scene of violent emotional storms. Maturin's church, if all the things happened there which Maturin says, would of course be unusually charged with spiritual energy.

That, as nearly as I can get to it, is Lionel's theory. It is rubbish, of course. You do not in any way alter the nature of a stone when you fling it at a squalling cat, even if you are in a violent temper at the time and most anxious to kill the cat. Yet, according to Lionel's theory, that particular stone ought to ooze with hatred

for a long time afterwards, especially if you happened to have hit and really hurt the cat.

From that ridiculous hypothesis Lionel went on to argue that certain people are more sensitive than others to the influence of those stored emotions which create what he calls atmosphere. And here, I admit, he has something to say for himself. There are people who can live quite cheerfully and happily in a house which would certainly make me melancholy. There are people who manage to say their prayers, with some satisfaction, in the rooms of continental hotels, where holiday-makers play cards until somebody strikes up a hymn tune on the piano and the Sunday service suddenly begins. These insensitive people are unconscious of the absence of atmosphere which Lionel finds—the existence of which I cannot deny—in some ancient churches. On the other hand, some of us are acutely, generally uncomfortably, conscious of “atmosphere” in houses and churches, in gardens, woods, and even on high roads.

Maturin, according to Lionel, must be singularly sensitive in this way; so sensitive that he actually gets back beyond the emotion itself to the original source of it, that is to say, not only feels melancholy in a melancholy place, as most of us do more or less, but is aware of the original cause of the melancholy, the trouble of the people

who were troubled there, and who, by their suffering, impressed melancholy on the place.

If all that were true—which of course it is not—Maturin ought to be a most useful member of society, and it would be well worth while for the nation to take him out of Bindon Parva and set him up in Scotland Yard with a good salary. Nothing, as I pointed out to Lionel, is so likely to affect a place seriously as a thoroughly gruesome murder. A horrible crime ought to leave the scene of it charged with emotion, hatred, fear, cruelty, greed, despair, and several other unpleasant passions. Maturin, of course, would feel them all directly you took him to the scene of the tragedy.

“And then,” I said, “he could reconstruct the crime and point out the murderer.”

Lionel did not like that application of his theory. I rubbed it in.

“Of course he could,” I said. “A man that could get the whole story of his son’s death out of Tommy Burke’s ghost wouldn’t have the slightest difficulty with any ordinary murderer.”

“You cannot,” said Lionel feebly, “treat these spiritual mystical things in that way.”

“I don’t see why not,” I said. “If these powers really exist, why shouldn’t we make use of them?”

“Because such use,” said Lionel, “would

vulgarize them at once. You might as well—you might as well advertise them.”

That is Lionel’s idea of the last possible degradation of human nature. He would, I am sure, rather burn down a church than publish an advertisement.

“I would advertise,” I said, “if I were Maturin.”

“If you were Maturin,” said Lionel, “you would not.”

That, I was forced to admit, is true.

“And being the kind of man you are,” said Lionel, “there is of course nothing for you to advertise about.”

That is also true. There is no use my starting a correspondence school of psychical apprehension for the study of the secrets of the past and the detection of crime. I could not manage the performance, and Maturin would not, whether he really could or not.

THE END







